

# Diplomatic Relations

**Diplomatic relations** are usually conceived as the business of envoys, dispatched between capitals. It reflects the historic economic ties between our two countries that the first official mission between Canada and Cuba was a Cuban commercial office, opened in the port of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in May, 1903. For more than a hundred years, there had been a flourishing trade between Cuba and the Atlantic provinces of Canada in Canadian salt cod and Cuban sugar and rum. The young Cuban republic briefly opened an office in Yarmouth, and appointed a Cuban Consul, Arthur W. Eakins to promote that trade. The Canadian government reciprocated in 1909 by appointing its first Canadian Trade Commissioner in Havana, a dentist named E.S. Kirkpatrick, leaving the British Embassy to represent Canada's diplomatic and consular interests in Cuba.

**Formal diplomatic relations** between the two countries began with the end of the Second World War, when Prime Minister Mackenzie King decided to appoint Emile Vaillancourt, as Canadian Minister to Cuba in April, 1945. Vaillancourt was a well known public figure in his native province of Quebec, as a historian, gourmet and writer of travel books. He established the first Canadian Legation in Havana, located at #17 Avenida de las Misiones. Cuba's first Minister to Canada, appointed in the same year, was Dr. Mariano Brull. By 1950, both countries had upgraded the status of their diplomatic representatives to full Ambassadors, and in 1952 Canada moved its Embassy in Havana to a modern new office building, the Edificio Ambar-Motor in Vedado, which today houses the Ministry of External Commerce.



First Canadian Embassy  
(top two floors),  
Old Havana, 1951