

But the trip had been scheduled long before the developments in Angola, and cancellation or postponement would have been a diplomatic slap in the face that would have worsened Canadian-Cuban relations for years to come. A public denunciation by Mr. Trudeau in Cuba would have made the rest of the visit worse than useless. Either course might have been morally satisfying, but would have accomplished little.

Past experience with countries like Cuba, Communist China, South Africa and Rhodesia has shown that treating nations as international outlaws neither topples their governments nor modifies their behaviour. Mr. Trudeau's presence in Cuba at least enabled him to state an opposing point of view and to keep the channels of communication open for attempted persuasion on future issues. It would be naive to expect too much from this, but, as one senior Canadian official put it: "Let's face it, most of the leaders who have been willing to talk to Castro have been the wild-eyed crazies, and that's bound to affect one's perception."

Defensible visit

Although the visit is quite defensible, Mr. Trudeau did bring unnecessary trouble on himself by being unreservedly flattering in his public assessment of the Cuban leader. The two men appeared to find a remarkable rapport, and the Prime Minister was undoubtedly frank in telling reporters he found Mr. Castro "a man of great integrity . . . within his own ideological framework, a man of world stature . . . a man with a great deal of pride . . . (who) has a great feeling for international affairs, a man who has assessed very well the qualities and weaknesses of various leaders".

He would have been wiser to say less. Such unqualified praise struck a sour note not only with many Canadians but — more important, in view of Mr. Trudeau's objectives — with Latin American governments, which remain deeply worried about Mr. Castro's international activities and ambitions.

In Venezuela, Mr. Trudeau's talks with President Perez appeared promising but inconclusive. President Perez pleased the Canadians by agreeing readily that something must be done about Canada's oil-induced deficit of nearly \$1 billion a year, the largest it has with any single country. In reality, however, there is no way Canada can even come close to balancing a trade relation involving so much oil. The closest Canada could come would be to win the contract for Vene-

zuela's railway construction, which may ultimately be worth \$1 billion; the visit improved Canadian prospects, but by no means guaranteed success.

Expand structure

The two leaders did agree that it was desirable to expand the structure of Canadian-Venezuelan trade relations from a *modus vivendi* to the establishment of an economic commission at ministerial level that would explore new areas of co-operation in the industrial, commercial and technological fields. The joint communiqué, however, stopped short of confirming that agreement; instead of a specific joint commission, it mentioned only "early discussions towards the adoption of an agreement or agreements on economic co-operation".

Perhaps more important, however, was the fact that the visit gained Canada a special sponsorship for deeper involvement in Latin American affairs. President Perez is eager for Canada to establish contact of some sort with the new Latin American Economic System (SELA), which is variously compared to the OECD and to a European Economic Community without the objective of political integration. The organization's present structure would not permit Canada to join, or even to establish a "contractual link". Mr. Perez may be thinking, however, either of observer status for Canada or of having Venezuela temporarily act as Canada's eyes and ears in SELA.

A brief visit to three countries will not by itself create what Mr. Trudeau calls "the Latin American connection". But, if the Government is serious about launching an era of closer relations, the leadership-level meetings were a good place to start. Below that level, many of the top Latin American technocrats — the people who decide in practice what trade deals to favour and which country's technology to pursue — did their advanced studies in the U.S., Britain, France and West Germany; they neither know nor care much about Canada. If more attention is to be paid to Canada's concerns and proposals, consequently, the word will have to filter down from the top.

What Mr. Trudeau accomplished, however, can only set the stage for closer relations in the future. A government leader's visit is a dramatic way of signalling interest, but the goodwill it creates is quite ephemeral. Everything now depends on the follow-up, the degree of diligence and vigour with which bilateral relations are pursued at lower levels.

Treating nations as outlaws does not modify behaviour

Saying less would have been wiser course