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Cuba - Canada

One Hundred Years in View



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Cuba - Canada

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Dept. of Foreign Affairs
Min. des Affaires étrangères

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Preface

Like the yellow Canadian school buses in the streets of Havana, which everyone sees but are noticed by few, the complex connections between Cuba and Canada are little known or appreciated. This exhibition is intended to bring into view the last one hundred years of our two countries' shared history.

The project began in the summer of 2002, when colleagues from the Canadian Embassy in Havana, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Fototeca de Cuba formed a committee to produce the exhibition. The period 1903-2003 was selected as the time frame for the project, taking as a starting point the opening of the first, modest, diplomatic representation between our two countries: Cuba's commercial office, established in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in 1903.

Members of the committee worked for many long months, scouring archives, reading old newspapers, probing people's memories and pleading for images from hundreds of people in both countries. We began the project knowing there were key moments to be covered, such as Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to Cuba in 1976, and President Fidel Castro's visit to Canada for Pierre Trudeau's funeral in 2000. But as we proceeded, we discovered dozens of other stories which had largely been forgotten - such as Canada's aviation pioneer, John McCurdy, who made the first flight across the Florida Strait from Key West to Havana in 1911; or the original plaque commemorating the "Oda al Niagara" by the great Cuban poet José María Heredia, installed on the Canadian side of the falls by the Cuban Boy Scouts Association in 1955; or the Cuban sprinter Miguelina Cobián, who led her 100-metre relay team to a gold medal the first time the Pan American Games were held in Winnipeg, in 1967. To do full justice to the material gathered for the exhibition, we decided to write a catalogue, launched an oral history project, produced a video and created a website too. The Fototeca de Cuba agreed to inaugurate the exhibition at its gallery in Havana's Plaza Vieja.

Every image in this exhibition has a story behind it that illustrates the richness of the history shared by our two countries. This catalogue reveals only a selection of the photographs we found and a brief summary of the information we gathered. We hope this undertaking will inspire others to investigate more thoroughly the stories behind these images. There is much they can teach us about how two once distant peoples have, over a century, grown closer together in friendship and mutual respect.

Havana, July 2003



Canadian Embassy
Ambassade du Canada



Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
de Cuba



Fototeca de Cuba

Contents

4	A Cuban Perspective
6	A Canadian Perspective
8	Diplomatic Relations
16	Commercial Relations
24	Co-operation
32	Sports
40	Culture
48	People to People
56	Acknowledgements and Credits



Paul Kavutz, Industrial Agent,
Cuba Railroad Company, 1912

A Cuban Perspective

It is with great pleasure that we celebrate the centennial of the opening of the Commercial Office of the Republic of Cuba in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, in 1903. This is the prime impetus for the exhibit being opened to the public today under the title *Cuba-Canada: One Hundred Years in View*.

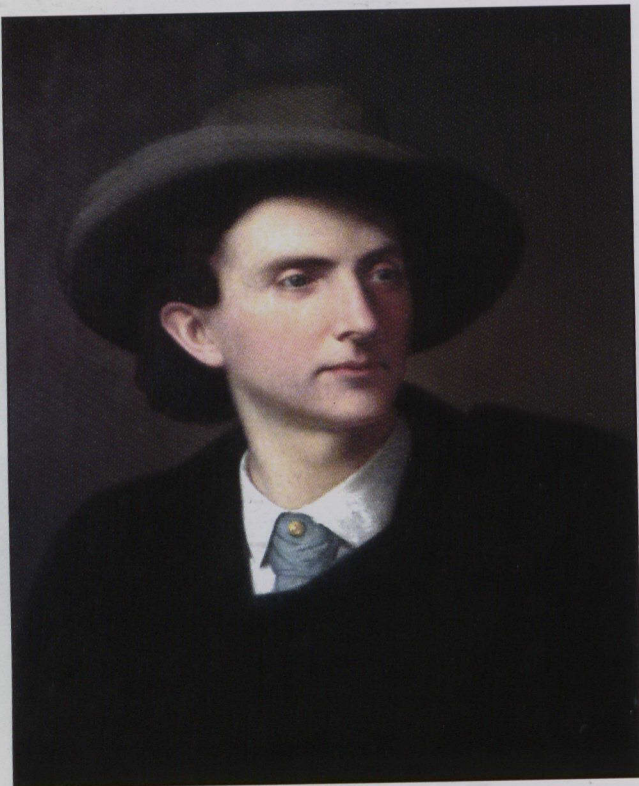
The Canadian Embassy in Havana showed considerable foresight in its contribution to the restoration of the Plaza Vieja, and in the surrounding area – which is part of a World Heritage site – erected a residence for a group of families that had previously been living in an ancient and dilapidated building.

At this centenary commemoration we should include mention of noble and historic antecedents. I refer to the ties established between the island of Cuba, and its capital Havana, and the northern part of this continent – a place of incomparable natural beauty, where different cultures came together to shape the great nation that is now Canada.

I am reminded of the voyage through these waters of Admiral Samuel de Champlain and the maps he bequeathed us as a memento of his tropical experiences during his travels at the end of the 16th century; or the death in 1706 of the celebrated commander and sailor, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, in the town of San Cristóbal de La Habana.

Many years later, as the Cuban people began their emancipation movement, the young William Ryan would demonstrate untiring solidarity with our country, arriving aboard the steamer *Annie*. Born in Toronto on March 28, 1843, Ryan was executed at the age of 30 in Santiago de Cuba on November 4, 1873. A member of the *Virginus* expedition, he was returning to Cuba to fulfill the mission assigned to him by the Government of the Republic in Arms. He and his companions were surprised and captured on the high seas by a Spanish vessel and the anxiously awaited reinforcements were thus lost, along with these precious lives. Ryan had reached the rank of Brigadier General through his exploits on Cuban soil. During his short life, he was moved to defend the causes of freedom and abolition of slavery. For the same reasons he had joined Battalion 192, renowned for its role in the Union Army during the US Civil War. He subsequently met Cuban émigrés in New York and embraced their cause. Ryan's example is a symbol of the ties uniting the peoples of Canada and Cuba in eternal friendship.

Portrait of William Ryan,
by Federico Martínez (c. 1910)
Palace of the Captains-General, Old Havana



We must not forget that, at the triumph of the Revolution when attempts were made to isolate Cuba in an unusual and reprehensible form of punishment, Canada did not break its ties with Cuba and diplomatic relations prevailed between the two countries. This antecedent sustains and nurtures what we are celebrating today.

For our part, we offer thanks to all those who have believed in the principle that peoples, like human beings, can be united only by love and fraternity, and by maintaining just economic and commercial relations and by mutual respect for each other's legal and social traditions.

It is in this spirit that two peoples come together, whether living under the generous shade of royal palms or golden maple forests.

As a pure manifestation of this amity, this exhibition presents the most intimate feelings of solidarity, illustrated by the same attraction, mutual affection and desire for justice that cemented the friendship between Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and President Fidel Castro.

Eusebio Spengler Leal
Historian of the City of Havana



Statue of Admiral Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, donated by Government of Quebec to Old Havana, 1999

A Canadian Perspective

This exhibition takes the year 1903 as its starting point. When Cuba opened its first commercial office in Canada, both countries were still in the process of achieving full sovereignty. In 1903, relations between the two countries were almost entirely commercial. However they were beginning to diversify from the traditional trade of Atlantic cod for sugar and rum, as Canadian investors and settlers arrived in Cuba to explore the opportunities for rebuilding the island's infrastructure after many years of war.

By 1945, the two countries were ready to establish more formal diplomatic relations. Both Cuba and Canada had fought with the Allies in the Second World War, and both participated in the founding of the United Nations. Canada emerged from the war with a greatly enhanced role in the world, and was keen to establish diplomatic missions in many Latin American countries. Cuba was the first country in the Caribbean selected by Canada for a diplomatic mission, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King chose a noted writer and historian, Emile Vaillancourt, as Canada's first Minister to Cuba. In one of his initial dispatches from Havana back to Ottawa, Mr. Vaillancourt recounted his first meeting with Cuba's Minister of State, Dr. Gustavo Cuervo Rubio, as follows:

"We then talked of some of the historical associations which have drawn our two countries together: (1) of the plaque I had erected in the Cathedral on behalf of the City of Montreal to its distinguished son, d'Iberville, (2) of the part a Canadian [William Ryan] played in the Cuban revolutionary war, (3) of the establishment of the Royal Bank of Canada in Cuba in 1898..., (4) of Sir William Van Horne's supervision of the building of the Cuban railway, (5) of the contributions Canadian life insurance companies have made to the economy of the country, (6) of the flores of Cuba prepared by the late Brother Marie-Victorin of Montreal, and (7) of the hopes that the Canadian Government and people entertain for still closer commercial and cultural relations with Cuba after the war."

Emile Vaillancourt (4th from left) at 240th anniversary of death of Admiral d'Iberville, Havana, 1946

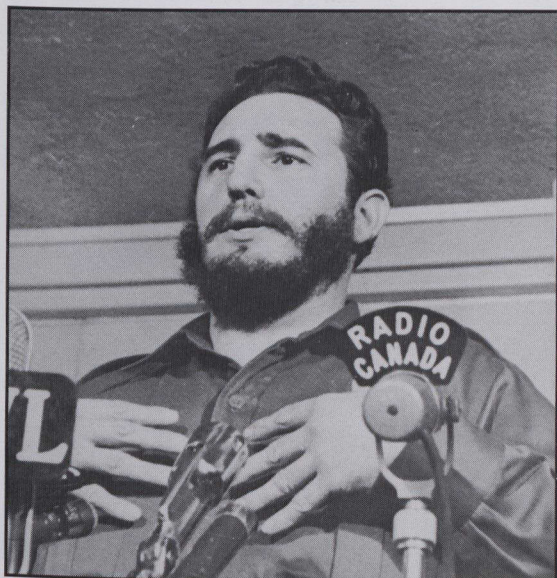


Readers will find photographs dealing with each of the above topics in this catalogue.

After 1959, the Canadian government made the strategic decision not to break diplomatic relations with the new revolutionary government of Cuba. The two countries became more politically distant as Cuba moved towards the socialist bloc countries and Canada remained a firm member of NATO. Nonetheless, Canada increased in economic importance to Cuba as a source of North American goods and technology. Expo 67, the World's Fair in Montreal which celebrated Canada's 100 years of independence, also proved to be a significant window to the world for post-revolutionary Cuba.

By the 1970s, the relationship began to mature and diversify. Charter flights started to bring Canadian tourists to

the island. Canada initiated a development co-operation program with Cuba, bringing Canadian academics and technical experts together with their Cuban counterparts for the first time. Cultural links were established as Canadians found their own distinctive cultural voice in the world. Sports became an important theme in the relationship as Cuba's achievements were highlighted for Canadians at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. In January of that year, Pierre Elliot Trudeau became the first Canadian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Cuba. Although there was some contraction in the diplomatic relationship by the end of the decade due to geo-political differences, Canada remained a major partner for Cuba in key sectors such as livestock production and fisheries.



Fidel Castro speaking before Radio Canada microphone, 1961

In the early 1990s, the relationship changed again. With the end of the socialist bloc, Cuba was obliged to find new economic partners. Canada in the early 1990s began to place more emphasis in its foreign policy on Latin America, including Cuba. The result was a rapid expansion in bilateral relations on all fronts. New Canadian investments in Cuba were made in mining, energy, food and tourism sectors. Cultural exchanges grew dramatically as Canadians discovered Cuba's vibrant cultural life and reached out to invite Cuban artists to Canada. A bilateral co-operation program was renewed, expanding significantly the range of Canadian academic

and non-governmental organizations engaged with the island. The spirit of the times was well captured in Prime Minister Chrétien's remarks during his April 1998 official visit to Cuba:

"Through good times and bad, our two countries have always chosen dialogue over confrontation, engagement over isolation, exchange over estrangement. And we have always done this in an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other's independence and sovereignty."

As our two countries enter a new century, the relationships between Canadians and Cubans are destined to increase. More than 400,000 Canadians will visit Cuba in 2003, making them Cuba's most important source of tourism by far. Also this year, 260,000 Cubans saluted a Canadian hero by participating in the first island-wide Terry Fox Run to combat cancer. This broad foundation of friendship between our two peoples is a firm basis on which to build a better future, together.

Michael Small
Ambassador of Canada

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



Office of Arthur W. Eakins, appointed Cuban Consul in 1903



Labels for Nova Scotia salt cod prepared for export to Cuba



Canadian Embassy (fifth floor), Vedado, 1953

The activities of the Canadian Embassy in Havana in the 1940s and 50s were intimately tied to the presence of the Canadian commercial community in Cuba, and the importance of Havana as a major international port. A highlight of the early years of Canada's diplomatic presence in Cuba was visits by ships of the Canadian Navy, which carried out peacetime winter training exercises in the Caribbean. These naval visits provided the pretext for elaborate diplomatic ceremonies both on and off-

board ship. The most impressive ship visit in this era was the visit to Havana in March 1950 of Canada's first aircraft carrier, the *HMCS Magnificent*.



HMCS Magnificent, near Havana Harbour, 1950

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution attracted enormous public interest in Canada – as it did everywhere around the world. Canadians received an early glimpse of the leader of the victorious July 26th movement, when Fidel Castro decided to include a stop in Canada at the end of his visit to North America in April 1959. Invited by the Junior Chamber of Commerce to speak in Montreal, he drew fascinated crowds wherever he went. Shedding both his security guards and those provided by the Canadian authorities,

he declared to reporters “there is a Latin atmosphere here that I sort of missed in the United States.” One of those reporters was René Lévesque, already well known in his province as political correspondent for Radio-Canada, who would go on to become a founder of the Parti Québécois and later Premier of Quebec.



René Lévesque interviewing Fidel Castro, Montreal, 1959

Canadian Policy Stays Unchanged

By WALTER GRAY
Globe and Mail Reporter
Ottawa, Jan. 4 — Canada has chosen to go along with its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, excluding the United States, in continuing normal relations with Cuba, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker indicated today.
Emerging from a Cabinet

meeting this morning, the Prime Minister declined comment on the latest move by the United States in severing diplomatic relations with the regime of Fidel Castro. But, he added, if changes become necessary they will be made.

The Prime Minister, who has been planning to go to the Caribbean for a few days' holiday before Parliament reconvenes Jan. 16, apparently referred to the NATO allies in an effort to set the public in both Canada and the United States straight on the subject of Canadian relations with Cuba. Mr. Diefenbaker is apparently perturbed by the fact that Canada has been criticized for choosing to ignore the U.S. trade embargo.

He outlined the Canadian position in Saskatoon last week. The text of his statement, reported for distribution in Ottawa, makes this reference: "In answer to those well-intentioned people who feel that Canada should follow the course taken by the United States, I would emphasize that no other

The decision of the United States government in January 1961 to sever diplomatic relations and impose a trade embargo on Cuba placed other members of the Organization of American States (OAS) under tremendous pressure to follow suit. Canada, although a member of NATO and trans-Atlantic ally of the United States, was not a member of the OAS and felt no obligation to do the same, as Prime Minister John Diefenbaker explained to his Cabinet on January 4th 1961. Canada and Mexico proved to be the only two nations of the Americas which maintained uninterrupted diplomatic relations with Cuba throughout the 1960s.

In the mid-1970s, the Liberal government in Ottawa decided to focus more political attention on Canada's relations with Latin America, including Cuba. A series of Ministerial visits followed,

culminating in the visit to Cuba in January 1976 of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Accompanied by his wife Margaret and their infant son, Michel, his itinerary included public events in Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago. At the personal invitation of Fidel Castro, the two leaders spent a day together diving and spear-fishing off a key near Cayo Largo, taking Margaret and baby Michel with them. Trudeau was the first leader of a NATO country to visit Cuba since the Revolution and the two leaders spent hours in discussion of geo-political issues. The visit also cemented a series of agreements between Canada and Cuba, including sports and fisheries - both of which became important areas for cooperation in subsequent decades. Despite their differences in political outlook, the two leaders established a close personal and intellectual bond which continued after Trudeau's retirement from political life in 1984, and was sustained during Trudeau's three private visits to Cuba in 1991, 1992 and 1995.

Pierre Trudeau and Fidel Castro, 1976





Margaret and Pierre Trudeau with Fidel Castro, 1976

A second high point in diplomatic activity between the two countries occurred after the election of a new Liberal government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1993. With the end of the socialist camp in the early 1990s, Cuba decided to open its market to foreign investment and to seek new commercial part-

ners. Canada responded with an active program of diplomatic visits and a renewed co-operation program with Cuba. Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's Foreign Minister, made a high profile visit to Havana in January 1997 and signed a 14 point bilateral co-operation agreement with his Cuban counterpart. Both the President of the Cuban National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón and Vice-President Carlos Lage made official visits to Canada. The high point of

Jean Chrétien, Carlos Lage and Ricardo Alarcón, 1998

diplomatic exchanges in this period came in April 1998 when Jean Chrétien became the second Canadian Prime Minister to visit Cuba. Prime Minister Chrétien and President Castro signed three agreements covering co-operation in health, sports and audio-visual co-produc-





Jean Chrétien and Fidel Castro, Havana, 1998

tions. They also inaugurated the new international terminal, constructed at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport by a Canadian-Cuban joint venture. As Prime Minister Chrétien noted in his remarks at the ribbon cutting, the new terminal – built to handle up to three million air travellers – exemplified Cuba's rapidly expanding links with Canada and with the rest of the world.

Pierre Elliot Trudeau died in Montreal on September 28, 2000. The spontaneous public reaction across Canada to his death reflected Canadians sense of loss of one their greatest public figures of the 20th century. As a mark of his deep personal respect for Pierre Elliot Trudeau, President Castro attended his official funeral in Montreal - the only serving international head of state to do so. This gesture was recognized and appreciated by Canadians, and for older inhabitants of Montreal brought back memories of Castro's exuberant visit four decades earlier.

Excerpt from *Granma Internacional*,
8 October 2000

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Tributo a la memoria del amigo Pierre Trudeau

En un viaje relámpago a Canadá, el presidente Fidel Castro asistió a las honras fúnebres del ex Primer Ministro de esa nación y en menos de 24 horas regresó al aeropuerto internacional José Martí de La Habana, donde esperó la llegada del segundo grupo de atletas de la delegación cubana a Sydney 2000. Arriba, rinde



Funeral of Pierre Trudeau, Montreal, 2000

Commercial Relations

With the end of Spanish colonial rule in 1898, Canadian investors began to perceive new commercial opportunities in Cuba. One of the first was a man who was already a legend in Canada – Sir William Cornelius Van Horne. An American who had settled in Montreal, Van Horne was knighted by the British crown for his enormous achievement in building the Canadian Pacific railroad, the first railroad to unite Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. At age 56, Van Horne began looking for new projects and in 1900 he made his first visit to Cuba. He became excited by the idea of repeating, on a smaller scale in eastern Cuba, what he had accomplished in the Canadian West. By building a new railway from Santiago to Santa Clara, he thus connected the island by rail for the first time all the way from Santiago to Havana. Van Horne became the President of the Cuba Railroad Company, and he established the company's headquarters and main workshops in the prosperous, expanding city of Camagüey.

Van Horne's banker, Edson Pease, the Montreal manager for the Merchants' Bank of Halifax also realized the potential for a Canadian bank to participate in the reconstruction of Cuba after the so-called Hispano-Cuban-American War. The prevailing legal restrictions against American banks operating outside their own country gave Canadian banks an edge. In March 1899, the Merchants' Bank of Halifax opened its first international office in Havana, and shortly thereafter, a branch in New York, thus positioning itself to finance Cuban-US trade. Pease soon became the bank's general manager and the Merchants' Bank became the Royal Bank of Canada. In 1904, President Estrada Palma turned to the Royal Bank to distribute the \$60 million in back-pay owed by the Cuban government to the Cuban troops that participated in the War of Independence. For the next sixty years, the Royal Bank remained the largest bank in Cuba, with 65 branches at its high point in the mid-1920s. The Royal Bank's main Canadian competitor in the Caribbean, the Bank of Nova Scotia, soon followed suit, by opening its first Cuban branch in 1906.



Royal Bank staff, Santiago de Cuba, 1910



*Naranja
foto*

Sincerely yours

W.C. Van Horne

Camaguey, February 1910

William Van Horne in Camaguey, 1910



Bank of Nova Scotia, Havana main branch, 1915

Other Canadian financial institutions interests also took a strong interest in Cuba from the beginning of the 20th century. Canadian insurance companies, Sun Life, Imperial Life, Confederation Life and Manufacturers Life soon became the dominant sellers insurance in Cuba. This concentration of banks and insurance companies defined Canada's commercial presence in Cuba, and provided the Canadian component of the Anglophone ABC (American/British/Canadian) colony in Havana until the Cuban Revolution.

Small Canadian farmers, merchants and businessmen also migrated to Cuba in the first decade of the 20th century to new rural areas opened up for sugar and agricultural development, in good measure by Van Horne's railroad. One concentration of Canadian settlers was in Las Tunas, where a prominent Toronto lawyer and entrepreneur, W.

Perkins Bull, bankrolled a land development company and named the town founded beside Van Horne's new railroad after his son, Bartle Bull. The Canadians departed Bartle during the First World War, but the town retains its Canadian name to this day. Canadians also migrated along with many Americans to the Isle of Pines where they helped established a vigorous North American colony. William Mills, from Bloomfield, Ontario, arrived in the Isle in 1901 and, through his Isle of Pines Steamship and Shipping Company, promptly established the primary transportation link to the rest of Cuba. While many of these Canadian settlers left Cuba during the Depression, some, like the Mills family, stayed on well into the 1950s.



Cashiers at Sun Life office, 1954



Isle of Pines Steamship Company ferry docked at Nueva Gerona, 1930s

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, both Canadian banks tried to work with the new revolutionary government. The Cuban government reciprocated by taking the decision not to nationalize the two Canadian banks. Instead, both reached compensation agreements with the Cuban government in January 1961 and their assets were transferred

to the Central Bank of Cuba. Once again, the Royal Bank played an unusual political role in Cuban history after the failed invasion attempt at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. Both the American and Cuban

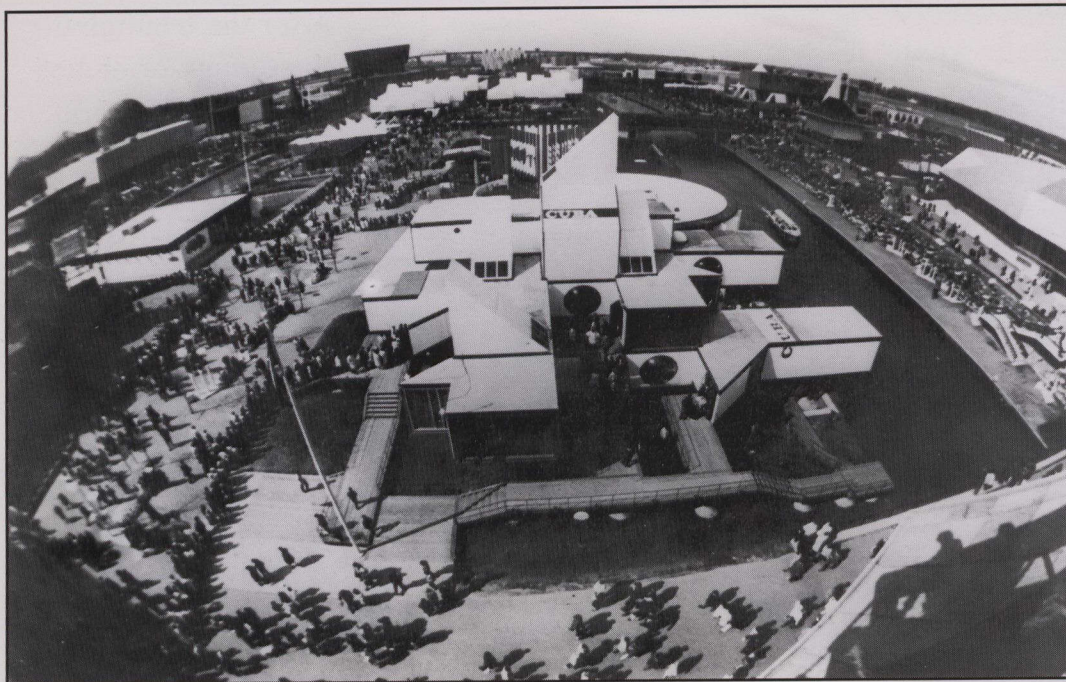
governments turned to the Royal Bank to act as the financial intermediary to manage the exchange of prisoners for food and agricultural machinery.

In the early years after the Revolution, Canada acquired a new commercial importance for Cuba as an alternative source of North American technology and equipment once the US embargo had been imposed. Canada also offered a potentially important new market for Cuban exports

beyond sugar. Expo 67, the World's Fair hosted by Montreal in Canada's centennial year,



Royal Bank staff making donation to agrarian reform campaign, Camagüey, 1959



Cuban pavilion, Expo 67, Montreal, 1967

proved to be an important opportunity for the new Cuban government to show the world what Cuba could produce. The Cuban pavilion at Expo was a major cultural and commercial attraction – in particular the Coppelia ice-cream parlour which offered no fewer than 52 different flavours.

Canadian farmers

started shipping live

cows to Cuba by air as early as 1946, but from the early 1960s, Canada became the principal supplier of agricultural animals to Cuba - above all Holstein cattle to build up Cuba's dairy herds. Using Canadian Holstein and Cuban Zebu cattle stock, Cuban scientists produced thousands of hybrid cattle, better suited to milk production in Cuba's tropical climate. The most famous offspring of this exchange was Ubre Blanca, a Cuban Siboney cross-breed with 5/8 Canadian Holstein heritage. Reared in the Isle of Youth, Ubre Blanca set the world record

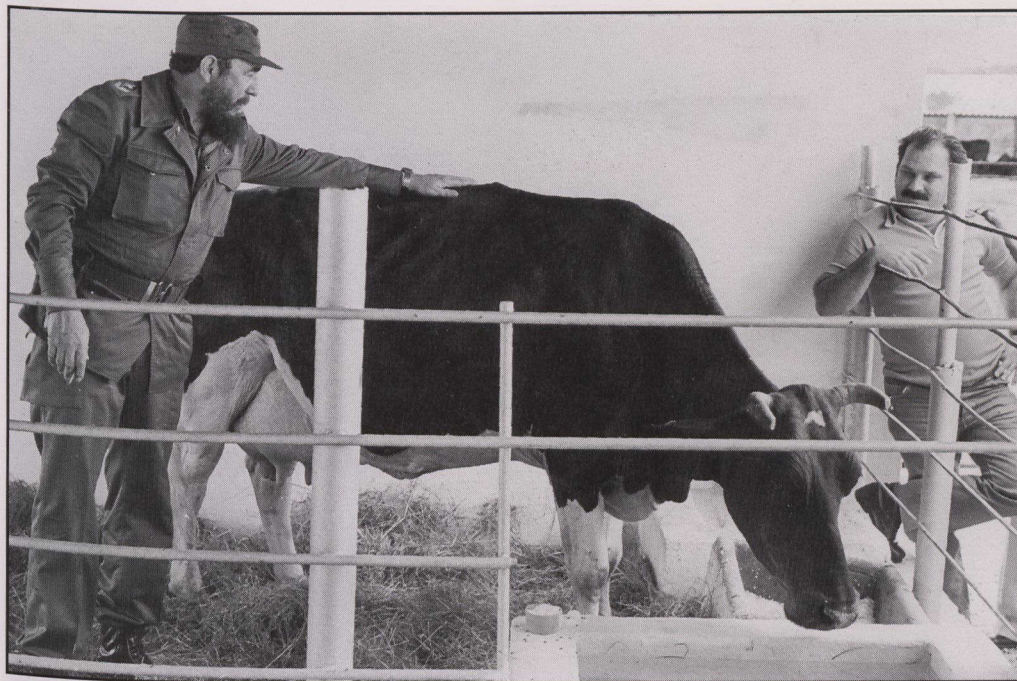
for milk production in 1982:

109.9 litres in a single day. Her achievements were reported in newspapers around the world.

As Cuba developed its own long-range fishing fleet, it sought access to new overseas fisheries. Following the visit of Prime Minister Trudeau in 1976, the two countries negotiated an agreement permitting Cuban vessels to fish under-used species in the rich fishing grounds off Canada's North Atlantic coast. The drastic decline of the Canadian cod fishery in the early 1990s,

First Canadian Holsteins to arrive in Cuba, 1946

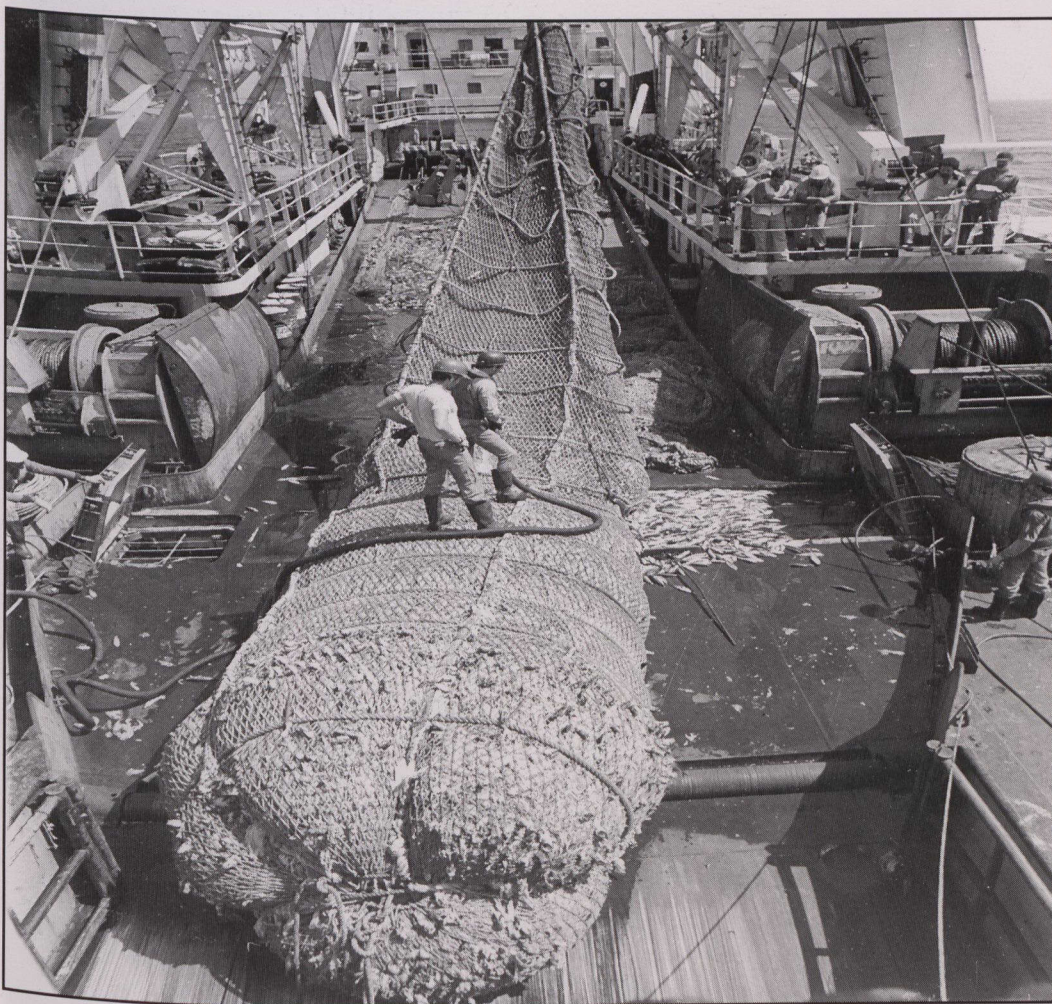




Fidel Castro with Ubre Blanca, Isle of Youth, 1981

the second largest source of foreign investment in Cuba, led by Sherritt International, a Toronto-based metals and mining company. A unique joint venture agreement was negotiated between Sherritt International and Cuba's Ministry of Basic

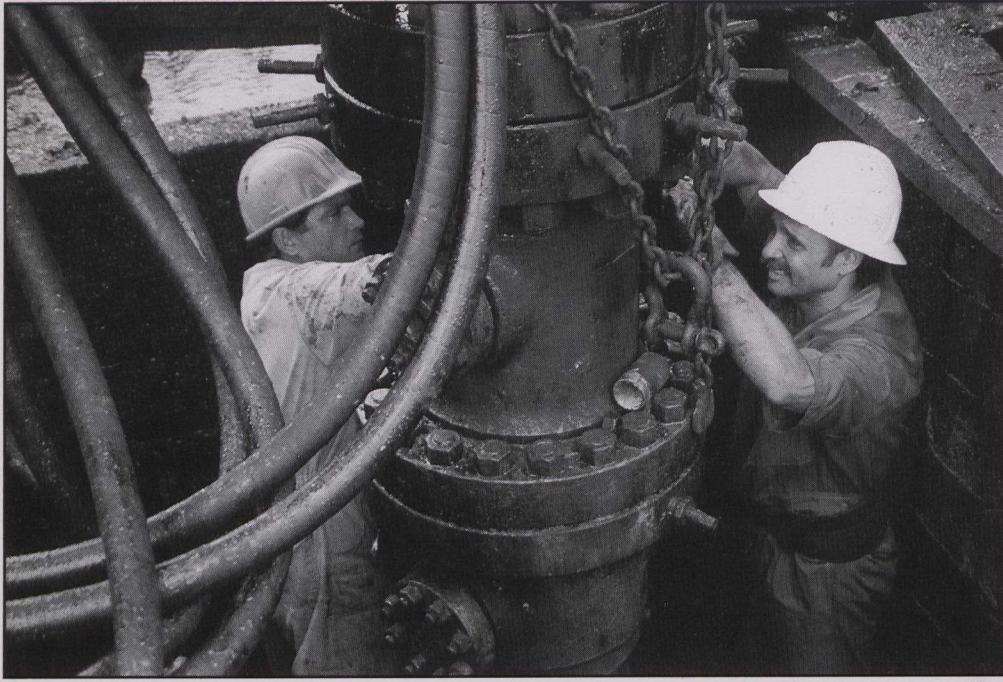
Cuban fishing trawler in Canadian waters, 1978



forced Canada to suspend Cuba's fishing quotas within Canadian territorial waters, but the two countries continue to co-operate closely in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization.

Cuba acquired a new importance for Canadian investors and exporters in the 1990s, encouraged by the approval of Cuba's new foreign investment law. Canadian firms became

Industries to create a vertically integrated nickel/cobalt metals business, with mining and associated processing facilities in Moa in eastern Cuba and refining facilities in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Today, 80% of Cuba's exports to Canada consist of nickel and cobalt for refining at the Fort Saskatchewan plant. Sherritt International went on to play a key role with the Ministry of Basic Industries in developing Cuba's unexploited oil and gas reserves along the north coast of



Cuban oil specialists, Pedro Luis Diaz and Oscar Barroso, at Sherritt International oil well, Varadero, 1998

Havana and Matanzas provinces. As a result, Cuba is now on the verge of becoming self-sufficient in the production of electricity.

Today, tourism is the greatest single source of financial flows between Canada and Cuba. In 2001 a new hotel joint enterprise was launched in Cayo Coco between the Cuban state company Cubanacan and a consor-



Sherritt International's Nickel and Cobalt Refinery, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, 2003



Inauguration of Canadian-Cuban joint enterprise, El Senador Hotel, Cayo Coco, 2001

tium of Quebec-based investors, led by Thibault, Messier, Savard and Associates of Montreal. In 2003, more than 400,000 Canadians are expected to visit the island – making Canada the most important country of origin for tourists to Cuba. This huge flow of tourists also attracts a wide range of Canadian businesses interested in selling their products to Cuban buyers. Canadian firms in many sectors annually visit Havana to make their products better known by participating in sec-

toral trade shows and the Havana International Trade Fair (FIHAV). In 2002, the Canadian pavilion at FIHAV, representing more than 90 firms, was opened by Cuban Minister of External Commerce, Raul de la Nuez, and Denis Paradis, Canada's Secretary of State for Latin America, Africa and Francophonie.

Denis Paradis at inauguration of Canadian pavilion, FIHAV 2002



Co-operation

Co-operation is a comparatively modern theme in Cuba-Canada relations which has evolved through two phases. The first, phase began in 1969 when the well-known NGO, Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO), approved an experimental program sending recent university graduates with valuable technical skills to Cuba. Within a year, the newly created Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had approved its first bilateral co-

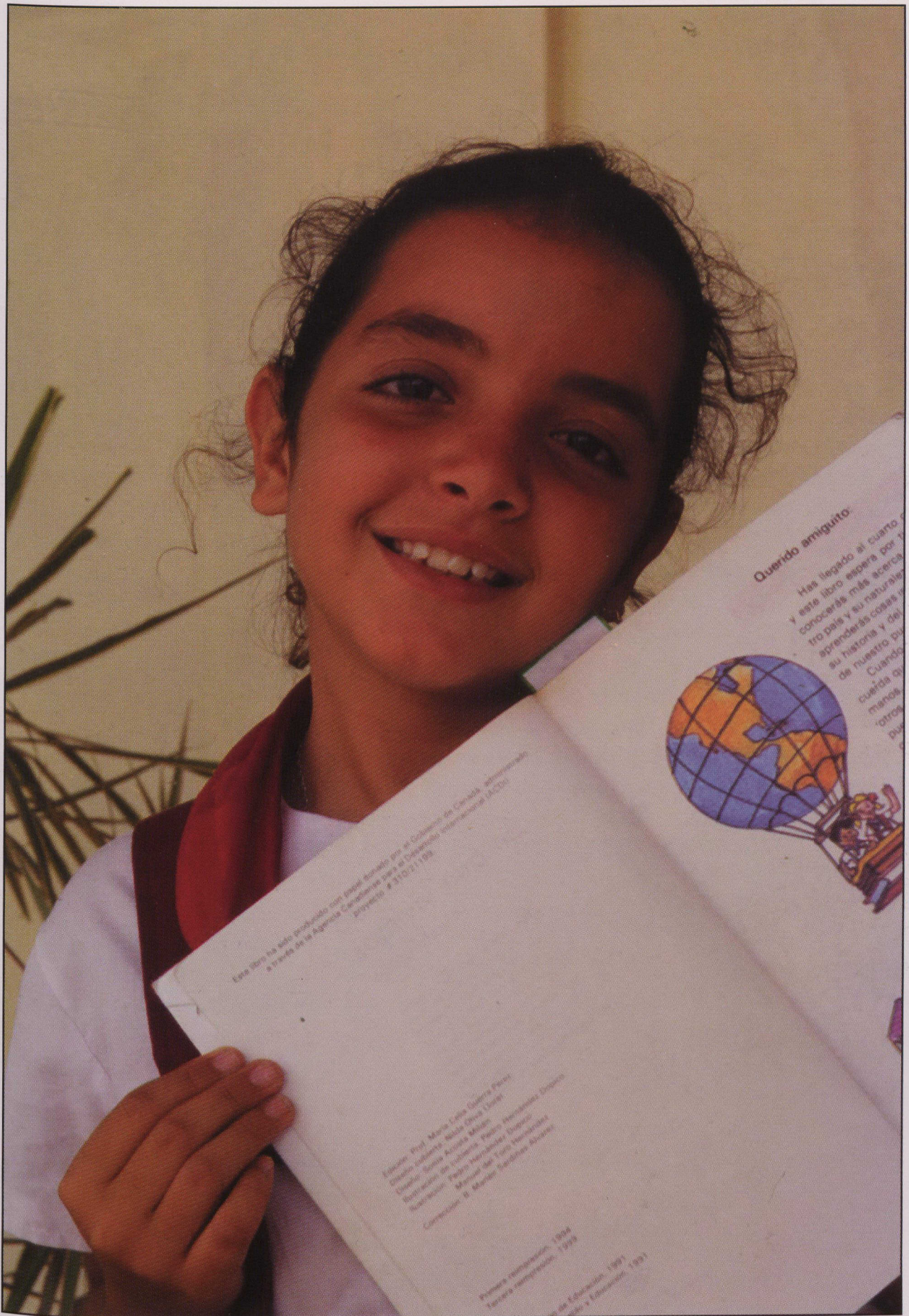
operation program with a socialist country. Through provision of equipment and training, Canada substantially helped Cuba to build two key scientific institutions: CUJAE, Cuba's leading polytechnic institute; and CENSA, Cuba's centre for animal health research. This focus complemented the work of CUSO and Canada's commercial interests at the time, especially the export of live cattle. In 1974,



CIDA President, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, cutting sugar cane, 1974

CIDA's second President, Paul Gérin-Lajoie visited Cuba to review the early success of these programs.

The first phase of official bilateral co-operation ended in 1978. Nevertheless, certain Canadian NGOs remained committed to working in Cuba using their own resources. The International Development Research Centre, an institution funded by the Canadian Parliament, also continued to provide grants to Cuban researchers without interruption through the 1980s and 1990s.



Cuban schoolgirl, showing textbook printed with Canadian technology, 2003

In 1994, a renewed emphasis on Latin America in Canada's foreign policy, combined with the difficult adjustments of the Special Period in Cuba following the demise of the socialist bloc, created a new interest on both sides in resuming official development co-operation. An initial five-year program of bilateral projects was negotiated between CIDA and its new Cuban counterpart MINVEC. Canadian NGOs were welcomed as a channel for official development assistance between the two countries. Cuban universities started to develop a broad spectrum of faculty exchange and training programs with Canadian universities. The Canadian Embassy in Havana was given resources to support small, community based development projects, through the establishment of a Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. Today, all of these mechanisms for co-operation are flourishing and development co-operation has become a central theme of Canada-Cuba relations.

Education was an initial priority for co-operation under this new program. Following the Special Period, Cuba had an acute shortage of paper, while Canada is the world's largest exporter of newsprint. Canada provided several million dollars worth of newsprint to Cuba to produce school text-books, which in turn created a Social Development Fund in pesos to finance a number of social housing projects. A subsequent project in the same sector involved donating the printing equipment and the editorial software to allow the Cuban Ministry of Education to reprint and update on a regular basis primary school texts. The first books produced using this modern Canadian technology, dealing with mathematics, geography, and natural sciences, are already in use in Cuban schools.

Marta Entralgo and Jesus Pereira of Editorial Pueblo y Educación producing new school texts, 2003



The health sector was also an initial priority for Canadian co-operation. While Cuba produces most of the medicines needed for its public health system, there is a deficit of certain drugs that still have to be imported. The Canadian pharmaceutical industry, in



Health Partners International with pharmaceuticals for Hurricane Michelle relief, 2001

co-operation with the Canadian NGO, Health Partners International, has helped reduce that gap by organizing donations of Canadian drugs for distribution by the Cuban Ministry of Public Health. Both the drugs and the costs of transportation to Cuba are donated free of charge by the Canadian firms involved. Health Partners organized special donations to support Cuba's program to aid the children of Chernobyl, and to

respond to Cuba's needs to replenish its drug supplies following Hurricane Michelle in November 2001.

One of the challenges Cuba faced after the disintegration of the socialist bloc was to adapt its centrally planned economy to succeed in a global market. Canada has helped the Cuban government modernize its economic management through two important bilateral projects. First, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency worked with the Cuban Ministry of Finance and Prices to create a taxation system for the new dollar-earning sectors of the economy. Today, the National Office of Tax Administration (ONAT) has offices in every municipality in Cuba, and a training centre, established with Canadian assistance in Cojimar, in east Havana.

Second, a consortium of Canadian universities and management consulting firms worked with the Cuban Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) to train a new generation of planners in market-based methods for forecasting the impact of different economic decisions. This was reinforced by assistance to the Ministry's training centre in Havana, and the development of a master's level course in public administration using Cuban case studies. The training provided under this project is delivered using distance education, via computer networks that connect the MEP training school to offices across the island. Today, Cuban planners are now able to update continuously their economic forecasts, and quickly analyse current data collected across the island.

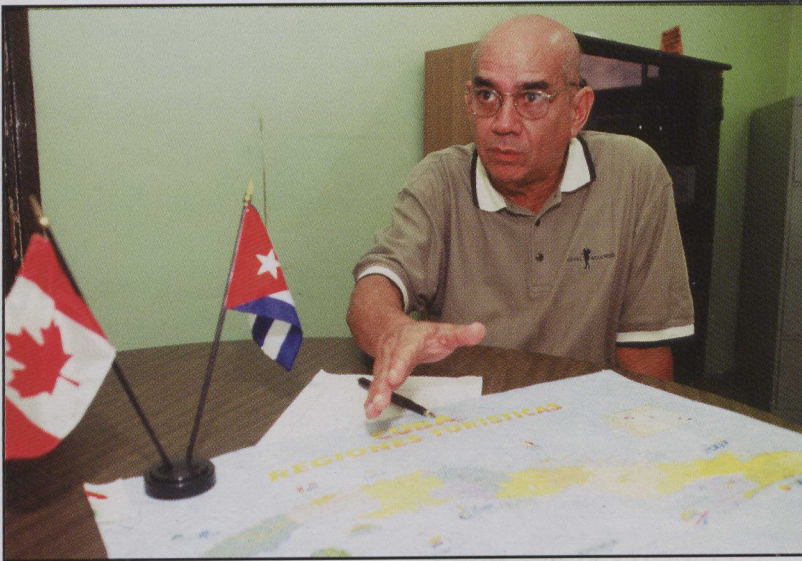


Irailia Mestre Ramos, employee at ONAT call centre in Old Havana, 2003

Cuban and Canadian universities have played a major role in promoting co-operation between our two countries. Today, there are projects connecting Canadian universities from Halifax to Vancouver with Cuban universities from Havana to Santiago. They involve teaching under-graduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellowships, faculty exchanges and joint research projects across a

wide range of fields. A good example is the joint master's course in the management of co-operatives offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Havana and the Research and Training Institute for Cooperatives of the University of Quebec at Sherbrooke. The Canadian and Cuban faculties involved have trained managers of agricultural cooperatives across Cuba, and from elsewhere in Latin America. The program has the direct support of Cuba's Ministry of

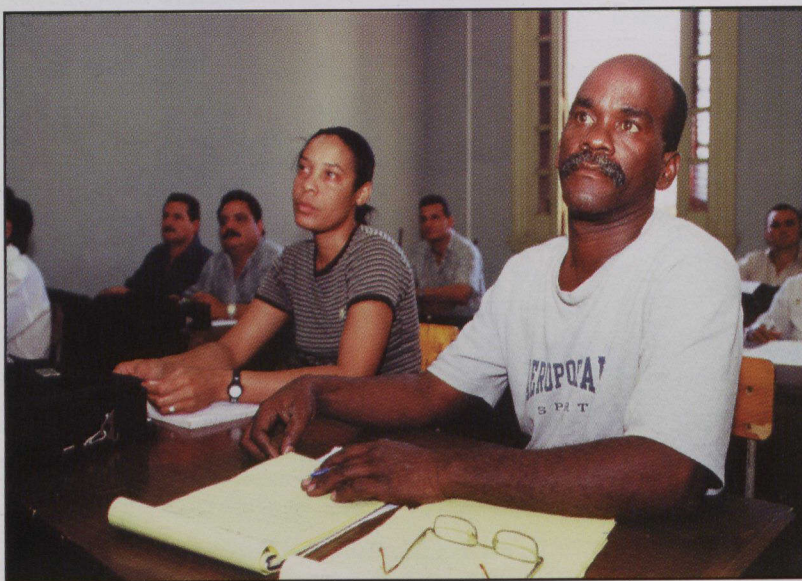
Sugar, which regards this course as an essential contribution to the modernization of this traditional sector of the Cuban economy.



Omar Granado, Director of Ministry of Economic Planning office in Matanzas, 2003

The Canadian Embassy, through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, supports a wide variety of

small development initiatives at the local level. A particular focus for the Canada Fund has been to finance social housing projects undertaken in Old Havana by the Office of the Historian, as part of the Office's master plan to keep this World Heritage site a living city. Calle Teniente Rey has become an axis for these initiatives in the heart of Old Havana. One entirely new building on a derelict lot at Teniente Rey Nos. 112-114 was constructed with Canadian financial assistance to relocate 14 families from a building further down the street.



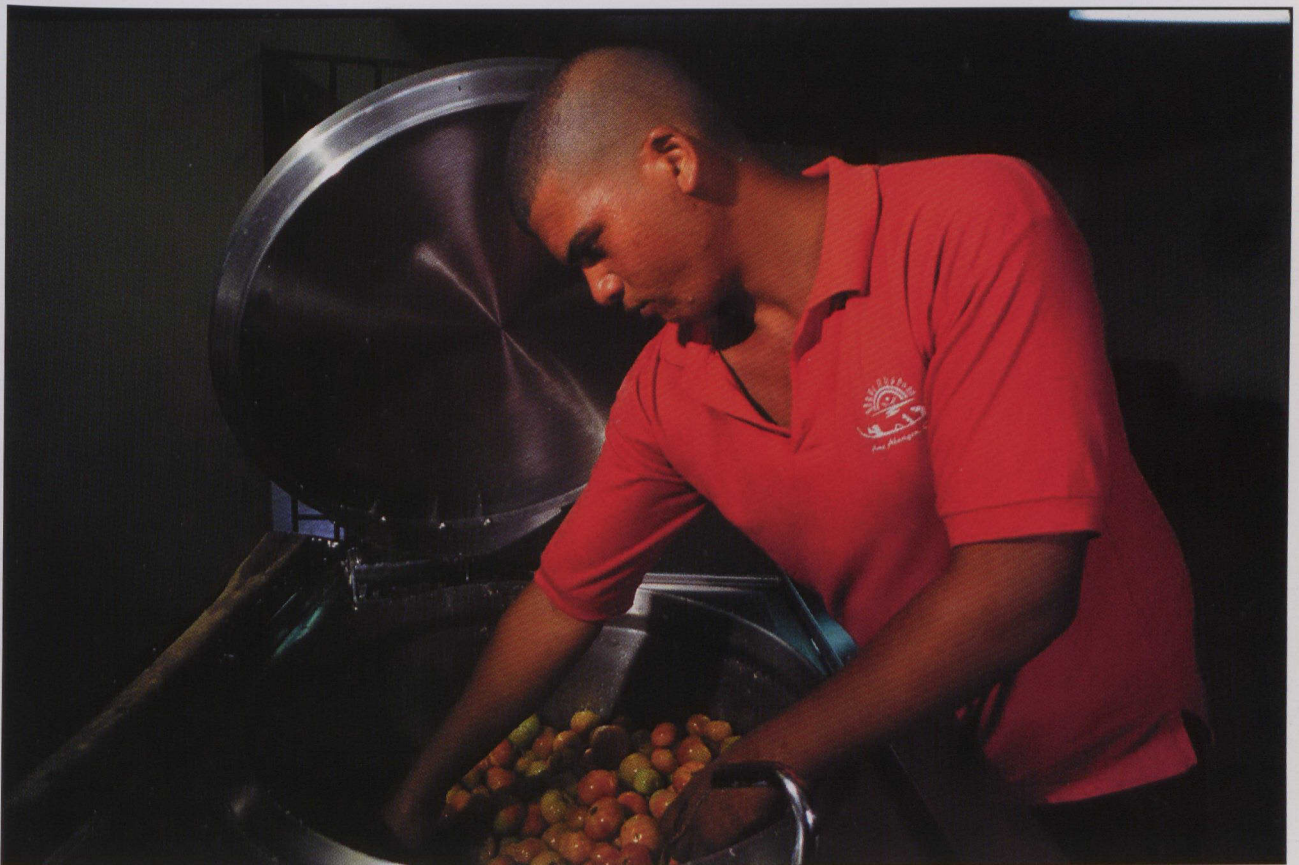
Students in joint masters programme, Universities of Sherbrooke and Havana, 2003



A new project with the Office of the Historian is now underway across the street at Teniente Rey No.113. This project will provide for the renovation of the facade, internal staircases, and electrical and plumbing systems of an 1860s era hotel, which was divided into separate small apartments currently housing 33 families.

Reconstruction of Calle Teniente Rey, No.113, in Old Havana, 2003

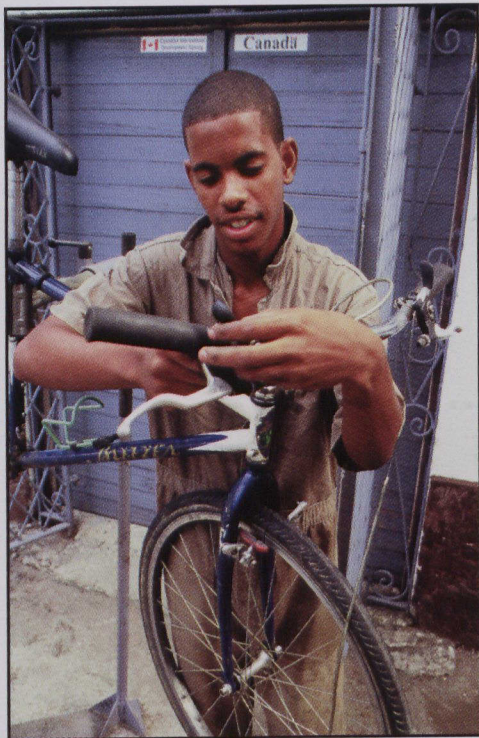
Outside Havana, the Canada Fund has, through the Christian Centre for Reflexion and Dialogue in Cárdenas, supported several projects running canteens for pregnant women and elderly people.



Rodolfo Céspedes, working at the farm run by the Christian Centre for Reflexion and Dialogue in Cárdenas, 2003



Worker at ACTAF demonstration farm, 2003



Student Yadrian Escull repairing bicycle at the Sanctuary Foundation workshop, 2003

Forest keeper Jorge Andrés Bouza in Parque Metropolitano, 2003

Cuban Association of Animal Production (ACPA) promoting small livestock production. Vancouver's Sanctuary Foundation has established an innovative project with the Ministry of Education to start a workshop to build and repair energy efficient bicycles and industrial tricycles. The workshop also provides valuable employment and training to young people in need of new skills. Havana's Parque Metropolitano, which covers the watershed of the Almendares River as it runs through the centre of the city, has benefited from a seven year project with the Canadian Urban Institute. The project helped thousands of people living within the Park's boundaries to start collecting garbage, recycling waste, reforesting the park and reducing discharges into the river.



Canadian NGOs have been major contributors to promoting co-operation, especially in the fields of food security, environment and sustainable development. For example, Oxfam Canada has worked with the Cuban Association of Agriculture and Forestry Technicians (ACTAF) to promote the urban agricultural plots around Havana. Care Canada has collaborated with the



Katuska Baldonado, resident of Parque Metropolitano, holds recycling box donated by the Canada Fund, 2003

The longest-running Canadian environmental project in Cuba has been World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada's co-operation with the Cuba's Centre for Protected Areas (CNAP). WWF's work in Cuba began in 1988 with an initial project to help design and implement a national park in the Zapata wetlands - an important refuge for birds migrating every year between Canada and Cuba. The interpretation centre built in Zapata is a valuable tool for educating visitors about the richness of Cuba's bio-diversity. Currently,

WWF is assisting CNAP in managing new parks, such as Humboldt Park in eastern Cuba, and in developing a new network of marine reserves. The results of this co-operation have inspired WWF Canada to make Cuba the focus for all of its international conservation work.

Canadian visitor Gabrielle Boisvert at the Ciénaga de Zapata Interpretation Centre and Ecological Station, 2003



Sports

There is no record of the first sporting match between Cubans and Canadians but there are extensive newspaper accounts of the first sports league that brought together teams from both countries. The International League of Baseball, which lasted

from 1954 to 1960, consisted of eight Triple-A teams, including the Cuban Sugar Kings, the Montreal Royals and the Toronto Maple Leafs. The Cuban and Canadian teams gave the League its international flavour, despite the preponderance of American players and owners. Its games were major public events for the era, with Monsignor Alfredo Mueller blessing the first ever match between the Maple Leafs and the Sugar Kings in 1954. Canadian Ambassador Hector Allard was on hand to receive the ball at the opening of a Royals/Sugar Kings match in Havana in the late 1950s.



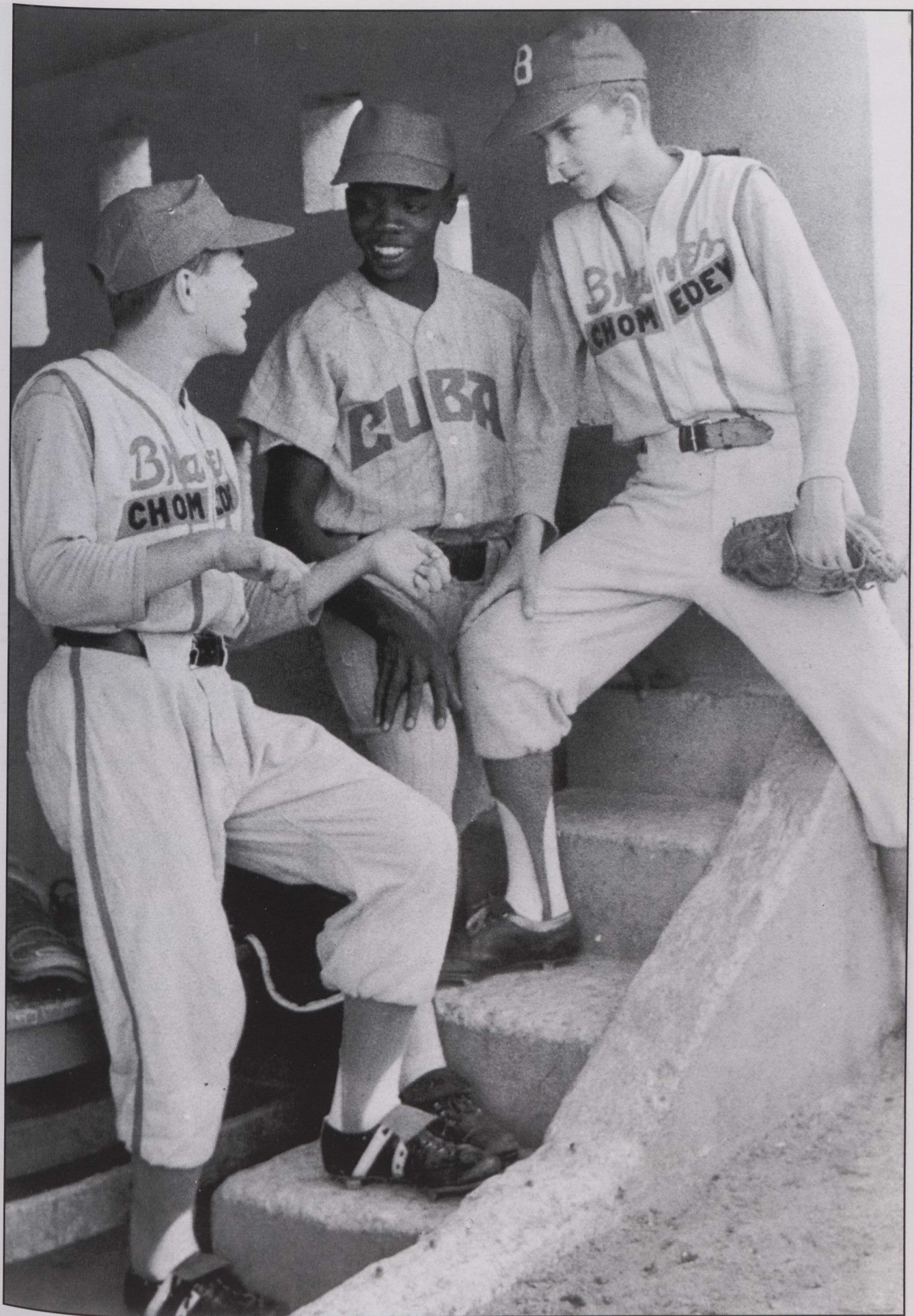
Jack Kent Cooke (owner of Toronto Maple Leafs), Monsignor Alfredo Mueller, Roberto Maduro (owner of Cuban Sugar Kings), and player Luke Sewell, 1954



Cuban Sugar Kings player presenting autographed ball to Canadian Ambassador Hector Allard before game against Montreal Royals, late 1950s

After the Cuban Revolution, the focus of sporting contacts between Canada and Cuba switched to the amateur level, as illustrated by this photograph from 1965 showing young baseball players from the two countries who met for a series of friendly matches at the Estadio del Cerro in Havana. The commitment to excellence in amateur sports and to the development of young athletes has been a hallmark of sports in Cuba since the early 1960s. It has also been a strong point of attraction for Canadian athletes, looking for a congenial environment in which to train and compete especially during the Canadian winter. A series of official sports co-operation agreements have promoted these friendly exchanges between our two countries since 1977.

International competitions have generated most of the notable encounters between Canadians and Cubans in sports. The first international competition that brought athletes from one country to the



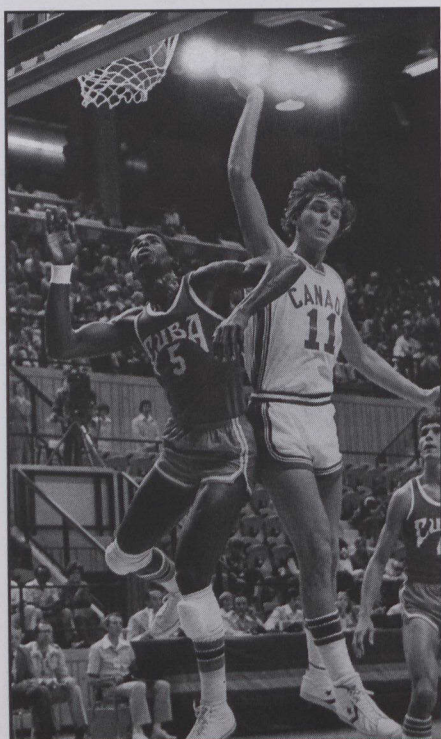
Amateur Cuban and Canadian baseball players, 1965



Miguelina Cobián, winning gold medal in 4 x 100-metre relay, Pan American Games, Winnipeg, 1967

other was the Pan American Games, hosted by Winnipeg in 1967, Canada's centennial year. Canada captured second place in the gold-medal standings at the 1967 games, with Cuba taking fourth spot. One of the stars of the 1967 Pan Am Games was Cuban female sprinter Miguelina Cobián, who won a bronze in the 200 metres, a silver in the 100 metres and led her team to

gold in the women's 4 x 100 metres relay.



The 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics occupy a special place in the annals of Cuba-Canada sport history. In Montreal, the Cuban athletes delivered some classic performances, remembered by fans around the world. One outstanding example was the medium distance runner, Alberto Juantorena. On July 25, 1976, he crossed the finish line of the 800-metre event with a time of 1:53:50, winning gold for Cuba and setting a new world record. Three days later, Juantorena repeated his gold-medal performance, winning the 400-metre event and, in the process, recording an Olympic first in taking gold in both the 400-metre and 800-metre events. This success converted him into an instant favourite with the Montreal fans. Also fondly remembered from the 1976 Olympics is Cuban heavyweight boxing legend, Teófilo Stevenson, who won the second of his three consecutive Olympic gold medals. In men's basketball, Cuba and Canada played an intense qualifying match leading up to the medal round, with Canada narrowly edging Cuba 84-79 to finish in the fourth spot overall.

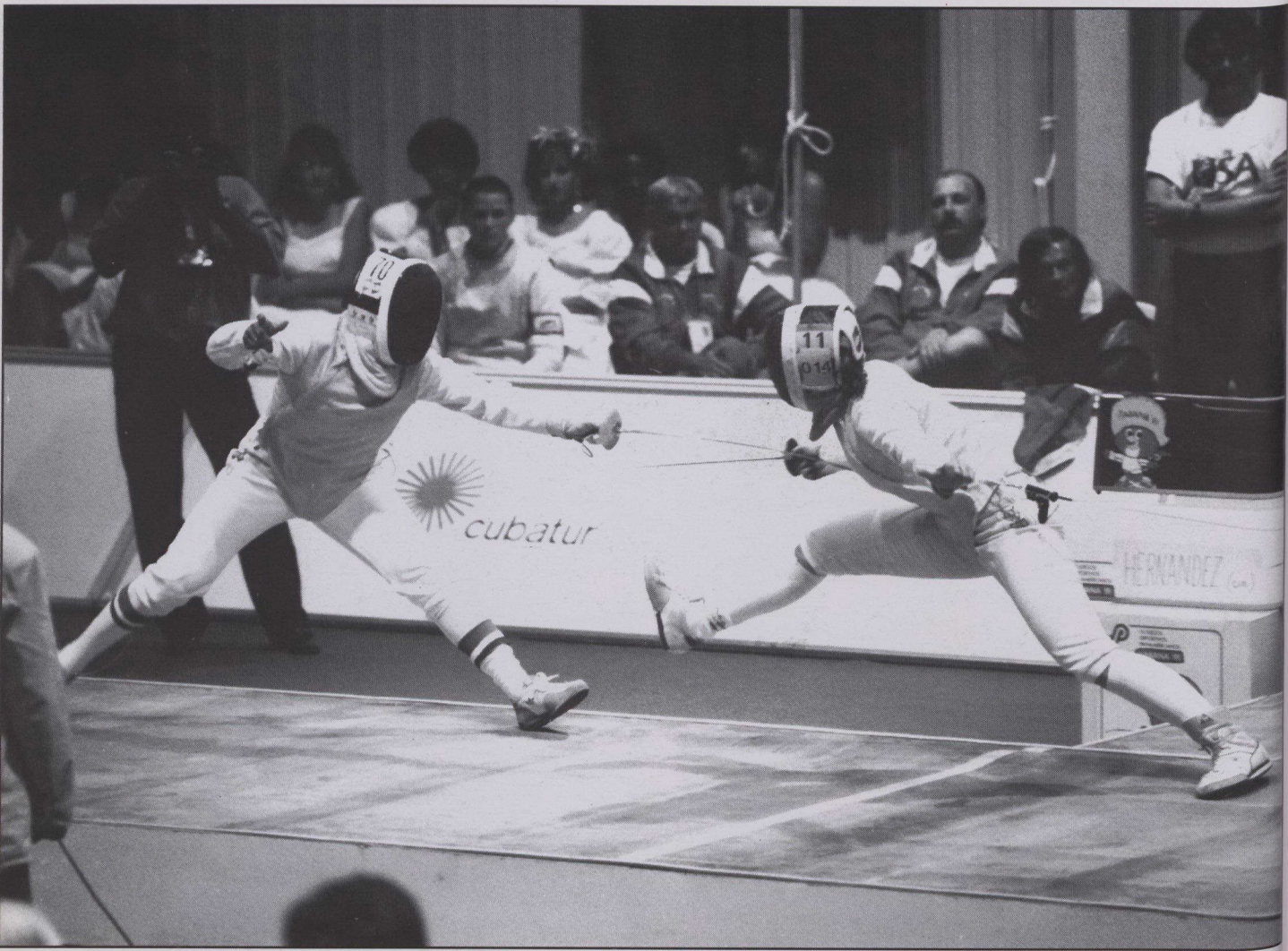
Ruperto Herrera and Jamie Russell, Olympic Games, Montreal, 1976



Alberto Juantorena winning gold in the 800-metre race, Olympic Games, Montreal, 1976

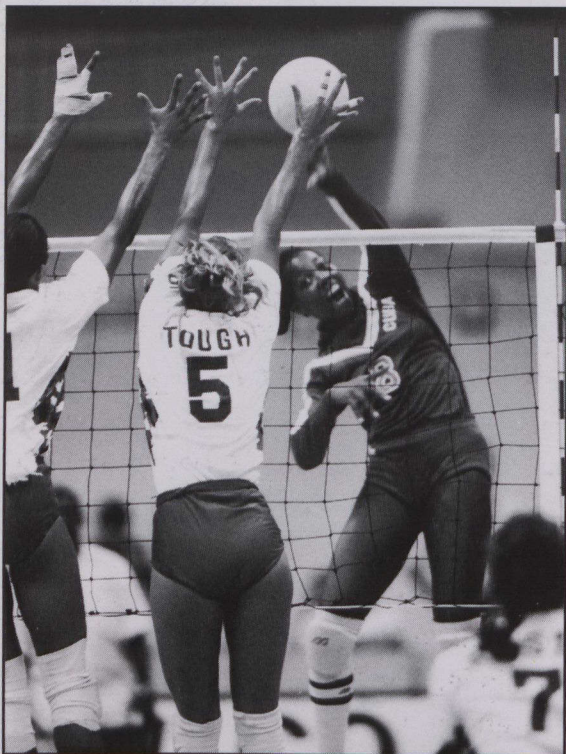


Cuban delegation
at the opening ceremony of
Olympic Games, Montreal,
1976



Women's foil event between Canadian and Cuban teams, Pan American Games, Havana, 1991

In 1991, it was Cuba's turn to host the Pan American Games in Havana. The Cuban hosts finished in first place in the gold-medal standings at these games, while Canada finished third. In many events, competition between Cuban and Canadian athletes was decisive in determining final medal allocations. One memorable semi-final was played in women's volleyball, in which the Cuban team overpowered their Canadian challengers 3-0 and went on to take gold in the event. In women's individual foil, Caridad Estrada of Cuba defeated Thalie Tremblay of Canada in a 2-0 match. Estrada too went on to win gold in this event.



Kathy Tough and Regla Bell with Canadian and Cuban women's volleyball teams, Pan American Games, Havana, 1991

In 1999, Canada again hosted the Pan American Games in Winnipeg. Cuba finished in second position at the 1999 games, with Canada in third. Given Cuba's prowess in boxing, a highlight of the Games was the gold medal heavyweight match between Cuba's Odlanier Solís and Canada's Mark Simmons. Solís eventually won the bout and the gold medal, on a 4-2 decision.



Odlanier Solís and Mark Simmons in heavyweight final, Pan American Games, Winnipeg, 1999

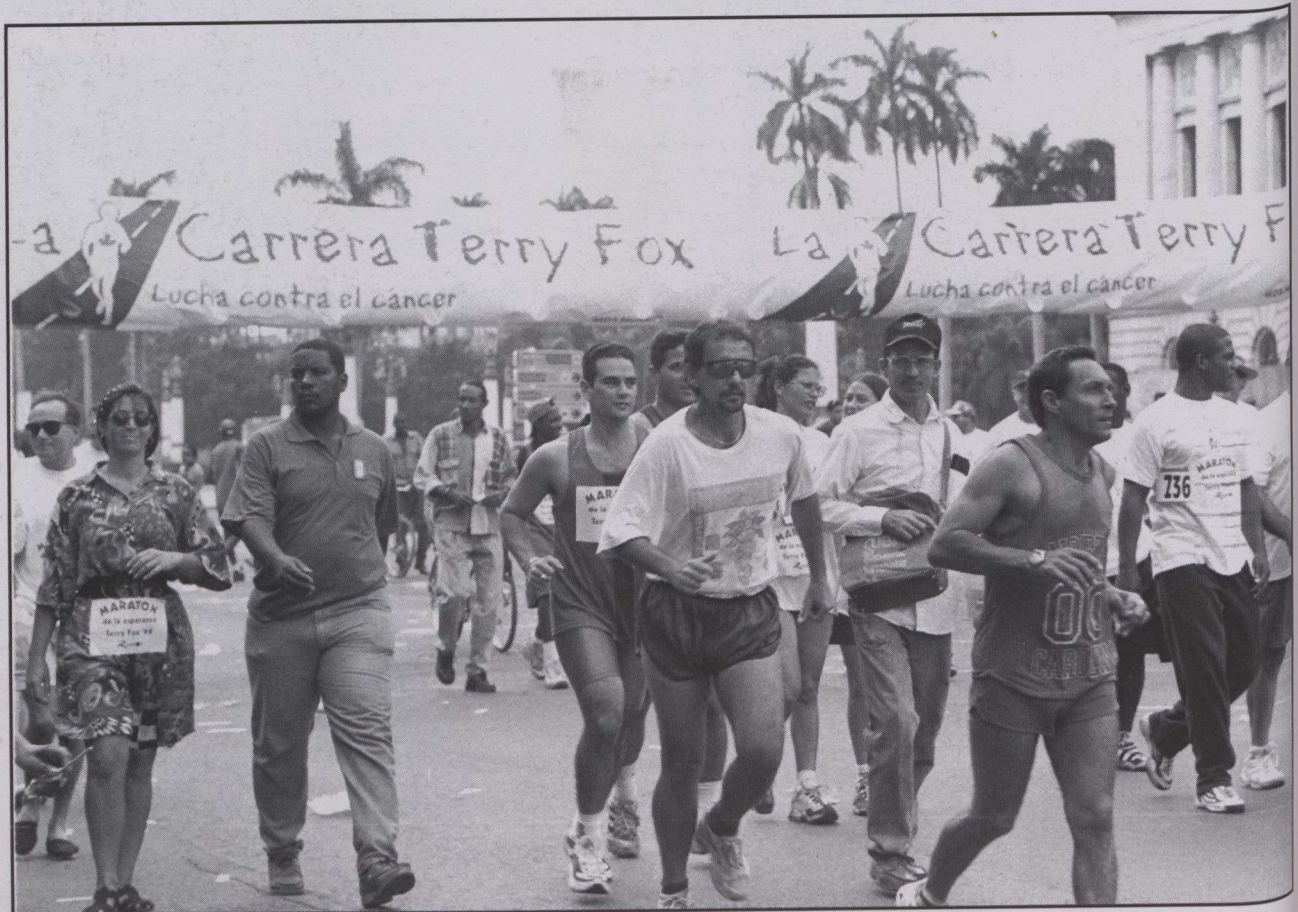
The annual Cuban Terry Fox Run reveals another way in which sport has contributed to the broader Cuba-Canada relationship. For Canadians, Terry Fox needs no introduction. Images from the "Marathon of Hope," a journey across Canada he began in 1980 to raise funds for Cancer research after losing a leg to the disease, are permanently etched in Canada's national consciousness. Many Canadians, though, would be surprised to learn how many Cubans are now aware of his legacy. Since 1998, Cuba has joined Canada and other countries around the world in organizing an annual Terry Fox Run to raise funds



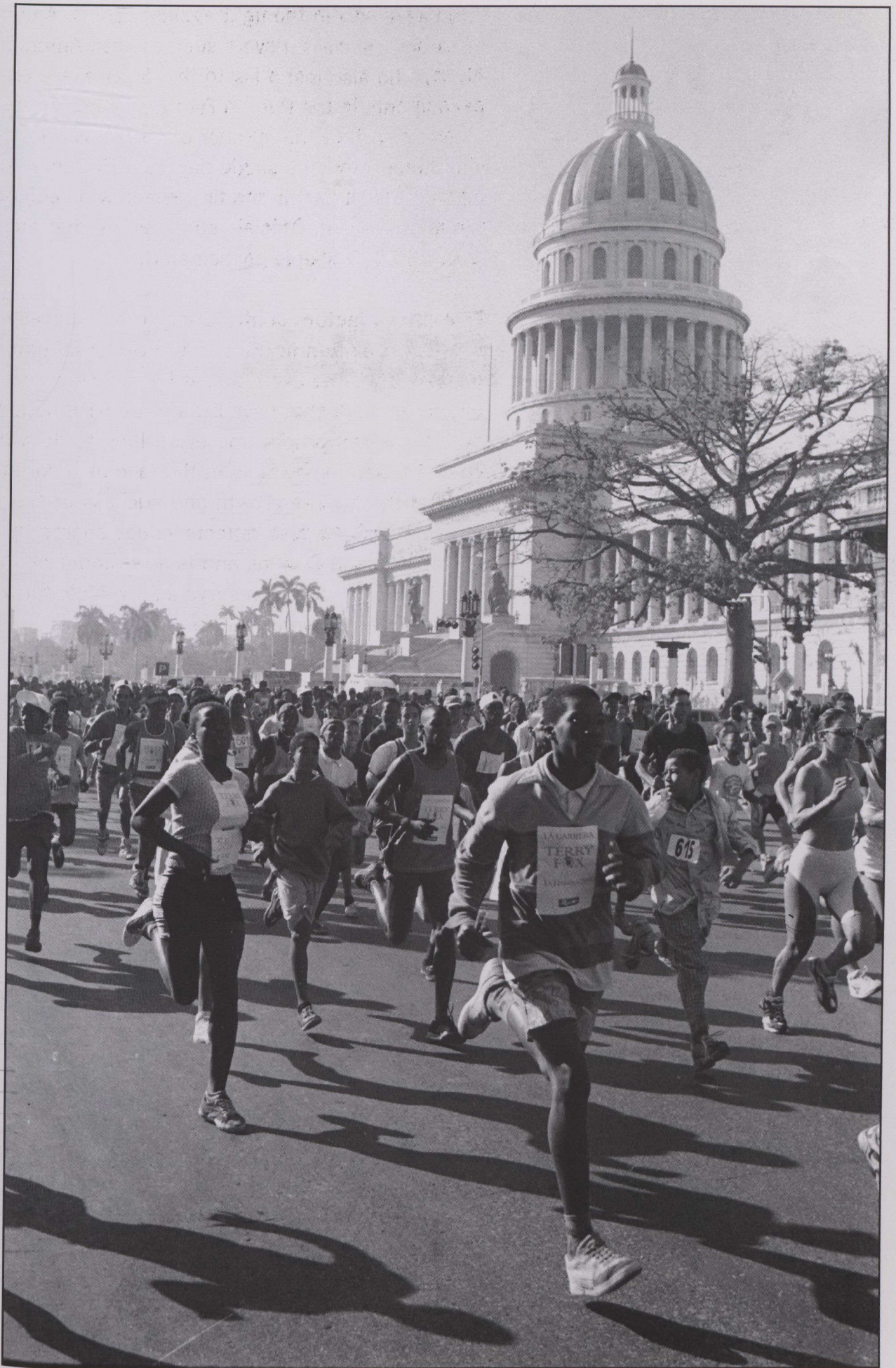
José Antonio Alena in the Terry Fox Run,
Havana, 1999

and awareness in the fight against cancer. A number of Cuban cancer survivors such as José Antonio Alena, who also lost a leg to the disease, are regular participants in the Run. In February 2003, Cuba set a new record for the number of Terry Fox Runs held simultaneously on a single day, as 155 Cuban municipalities took part in the first island-wide edition of the annual event. Official estimates are that more than 260,000 people participated.

One of the factors contributing to the success of the Terry Fox Run in Cuba is the universal nature of its message. The example set by Terry Fox resonates in ways that have little to do with nationality, politics, or geography and everything to do with basic human aspirations in the face of a common, natural threat. The growth and success of the Terry Fox Run in Cuba also reflects values shared by Canadians and Cubans and is a reminder of the way in which sport can serve as a vehicle for a much larger, common cause.



Terry Fox Run, Havana, 1999



Terry Fox Run, Havana, 2000

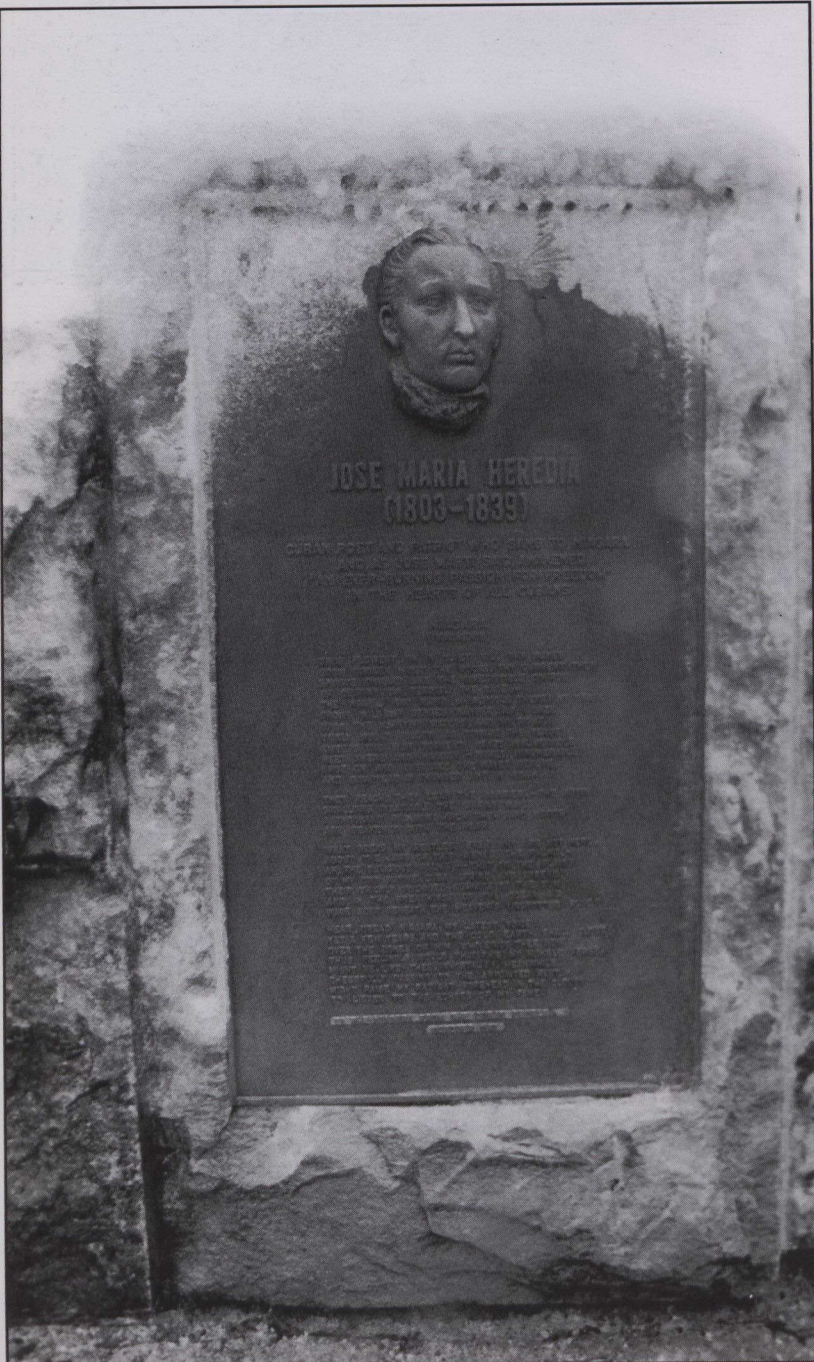
Culture

Few Canadians know that one of the greatest poems in Latin American literature was written by a Cuban in honour of Canada's most famous landmark. In contrast, every Cuban school child knows that the *Oda al Niágara* was written in 1824 by Cuba's first great poet, José María Heredia. His ode, and the cataracts which inspired it, have provided a natural magnet for Cubans visiting Canada. In 1915, the great Cuban society photographer Joaquín Blez photographed Niágara's Horseshoe Falls from the

Plaque to Heredia at Niágara Falls, installed 1989

Canadian side - perhaps the first known photograph taken in Canada by a Cuban. In 1955 the Cuban Boy Scouts Association installed a bronze plaque at the falls to commemorate Heredia. In 1989, the Cuban government commissioned a fine bronze bas relief to replace the earlier plaque with Heredia's profile and a fragment of his ode. It was installed at the crest of the falls - in exactly the spot where Blez had taken his photograph over 70 years before.

Cuba has also provided an important entry point for Canadian literature into the Spanish-speaking world. The renowned Canadian novelists Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson have been regular visitors to Cuba for almost twenty years. In 1997, with the assistance of Cuba's Union of Artists and Writers, they edited *Desde el invierno*, the first ever anthology of English Canadian short stories translated into Spanish. More recently Dr. Keith Ellis, a distinguished professor of Latin American literature at the University of Toronto worked with the staff of Havana's Casa de las Américas to produce a special Canadian edition of the literary magazine *Casa* in late 2000. This issue, which has been widely distributed in Latin

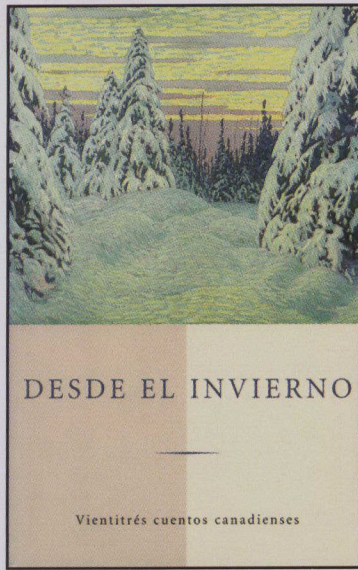




Niagara Falls photographed by Joaquín Blez, 1915



Cuban Boy Scouts installing plaque to Heredia at Niagara Falls, 1955



Desde el invierno, anthology of Canadian writing, published in Cuba, 1997

Alicia Alonso as Giselle with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, 1967



Jesús Corrales and Evelyn Hart, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, 1998

America, offers the most comprehensive anthology in Spanish to date of both French and English Canadian literature - from poems and short stories to novels and film scripts.

Since the Revolution, dance has been one of Cuba's principal passports to the world, due to the prestige of Cuba's National Ballet under the direction of prima ballerina Alicia Alonso. Alonso came to Canada for the first time after the Revolution for Expo 67 as a guest performer with Montreal's Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Her role as Giselle received rapturous reviews. Alonso toured Canada with her own company in 1971 and again in 1978. In return, Canada's famous Royal Winnipeg Ballet became the first North American dance company to perform in Cuba after the Revolution, when they made Havana the final stop in their epic Latin American tour in June 1974. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet remains a principal artistic bridge between Canada and Cuba. Today the company's top three male dancers are all Cubans - Arionel P. Vargas, Reyneris Reyes and Jesús Corrales.

Cuba's incredibly rich musical tradition has been a source of inspiration for many foreign artists. No musician has done more to synthesize Canadian and Cuban cultural jazz styles than the Toronto based jazz musician Jane Bunnett and her husband Larry Kramer. Bunnett and Kramer have developed a deep personal rapport with many Cuban musicians and every summer for more than a decade, they have brought a group of Cuban jazz artists to play with them in festivals across Canada. Their voyage through Cuba's heartland to discover its musical traditions was brilliantly captured in the National Film Board documentary *Spirits of Havana*, screened for the first time at the XXII Havana International Film Festival in December 2000.



Guillermo Barreto and Jane Bunnett at EGREM studios, Havana, 1991

Given Canada's climate, summer outdoor festivals have long provided a venue for celebrating world music. Cuban jazz greats, such as Chucho Valdés, Compay Segundo and Los Van Van, have been regular performers in Canada, above all at the Montreal Jazz Festival, for more than a decade. In 2002 audiences in Montreal were thrilled to hear Cuba's celebrated salsa sensation, Issac Delgado.



Issac Delgado at the Montreal International Jazz Festival, 2002



"¡Afrocubanismo!" parade in Banff, 1994

Canada's centre of excellence for the performing arts, the Banff Centre in Alberta, has also maintained a long tradition of collaboration with Cuba. The first well known Cuban artist to become a resident instructor there was the composer Leo Brouwer in 1981. Laura Alonso, director of the Cuban company Prodanza, was a faculty member at Banff's dance program for six summers from 1981 to 1987. More recently, in 1994 and 1996 the Banff Centre mounted two extensive multi-disciplinary festivals of Cuban arts, entitled "¡Afrocubanismo!" which covered lectures on music, religion and jazz, to outdoor performances and parades against the spectacular backdrop of Alberta's Rocky Mountains.

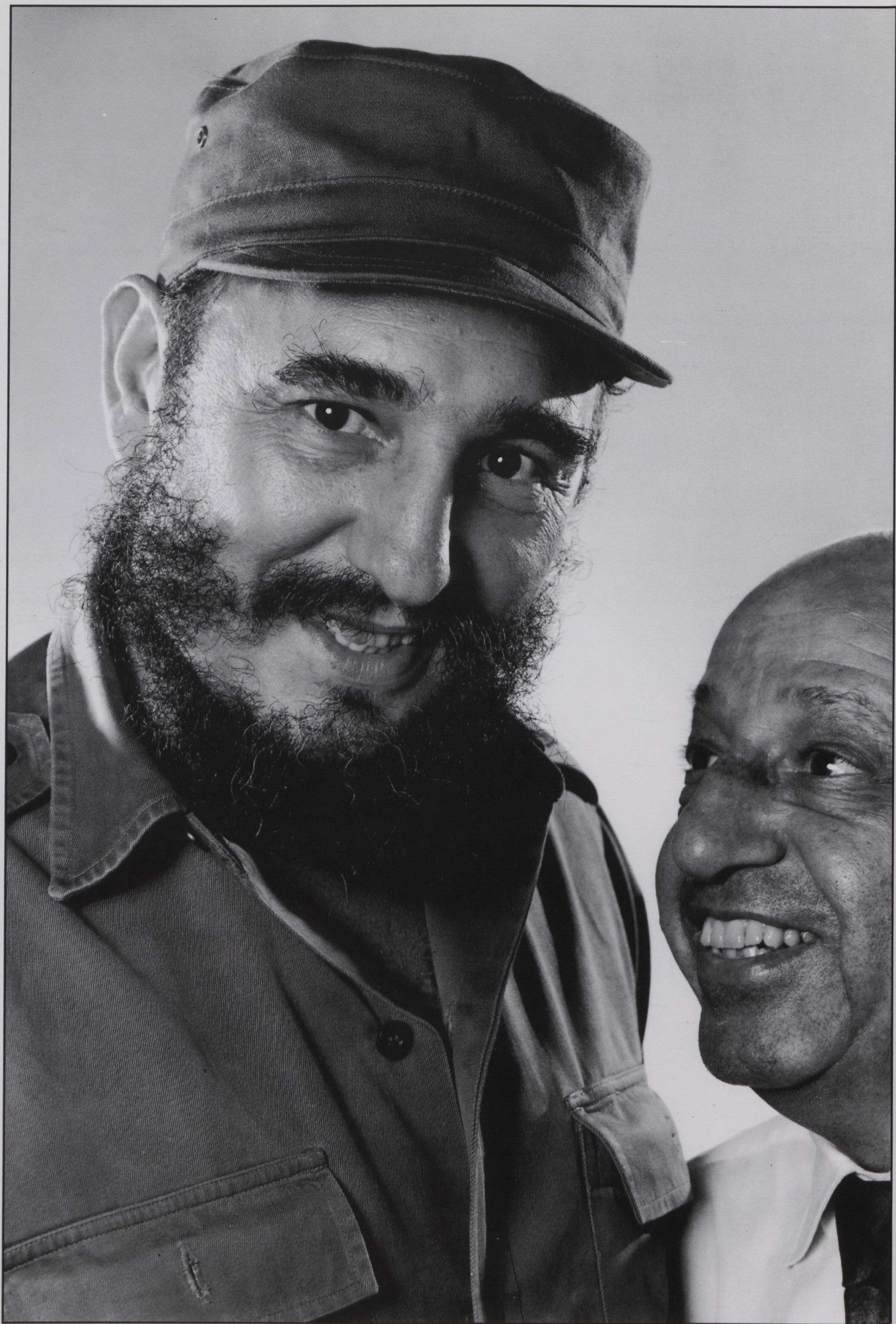
In the visual arts, Canadian-born artist Arnold Belkin was the winner of the prize at the first ever Havana Biennial in 1984. Belkin grew up in Vancouver but moved to Mexico in the 1940s, where he became the foremost inheritor of the great Mexican muralist tradition. His prize-winning mural depicting Emiliano Zapata can be seen today in the Casa Benito Juárez in Old Havana. Cuban graphic arts have also made an impact in Canada. In 1994, the University of Quebec in Montreal organized the largest ever exhibition of Cuban poster art, based on the collection of posters sent over the years to the National Film Board of Canada by its Cuban counter-part, ICAIC.



Mural by Arnold Belkin,
awarded Havana Biennial
Prize in 1984



Ernest Hemingway with Yousuf Karsh at Finca Vigía, 1957



Fidel Castro with Yousuf Karsh, 1971



Exhibition of Cuban posters, University of Quebec at Montreal, 1996

Photography itself is rapidly growing as a medium for cultural exchange between our two countries. The greatest portrait photographer of the 20th century, Yousuf Karsh, made his home in Ottawa. Karsh took one of his best loved portraits - of Ernest Hemingway - at Hemingway's Finca Vigía outside Havana in 1957. Karsh returned to Cuba in July 1971 and waited expectantly for a week at the Canadian Official Residence until, late one night, the moment came to capture his impression of Fidel Castro. Karsh's private collection has also yielded two photos taken in Cuba showing Karsh himself with each of these famous men.

private collection has also yielded two photos taken in Cuba showing Karsh himself with each of these famous men.

In more recent times, the colour and light of Havana has proven a natural attraction for Canadian photographers of all styles. Collaboration between Canadians

and Cubans was celebrated in a reciprocal show curated by Toronto artist Andrew Danson. Photographs by Cuban photographers were shown in Toronto's Hart House in October 2000 and the work of their Canadian counterparts was exhibited at the Fototeca in Havana in April 2001. Danson's initiative provided the genesis for this exhibition.



Canadian photographer Elaine Ling and Ambassador Michael Small, Fototeca de Cuba, 2001

People to People

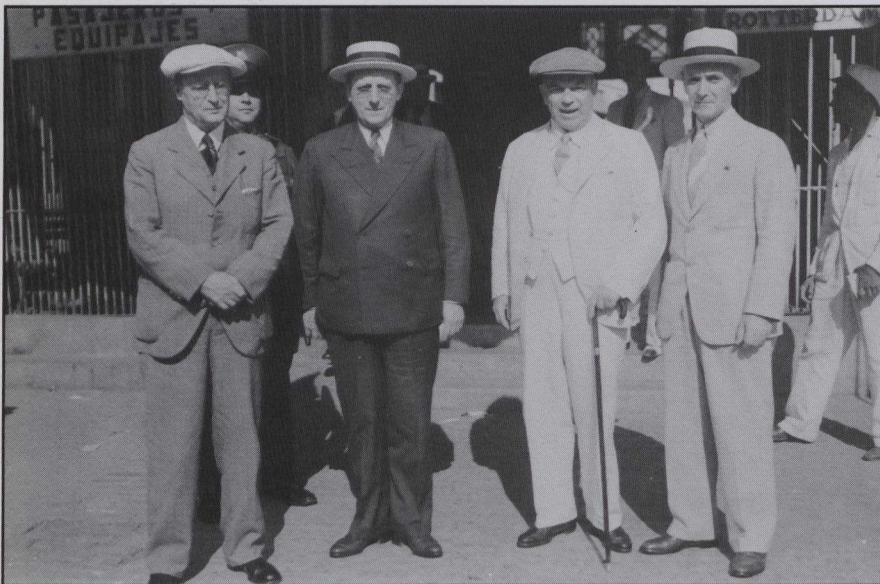
Relationships between governments are inevitably subject to change, but what sustains the relationship between countries are the contacts made between people. The first Canadian of the 20th century to have made a major impact on the Cuban imagination was young Nova Scotian, John A. McCurdy who began his experiments in aviation at Baddeck with Alexander Graham Bell. On January 31, 1911 McCurdy took off in his Curtiss biplane from the sands of Key West in an attempt to win a \$10,000 prize for being the first person to cross the Florida Straits by air. Huge crowds formed along Havana's Malecón, awaiting his arrival. Although a fuel leak forced him to land a few miles short of the Cuban coast, he was deemed to have won the contest and was treated to a hero's welcome in Havana.

Less spectacular was the first visit to Cuba by a Canadian Prime Minister. Canada's longest-serving leader, William Lyon Mackenzie King, arrived in Havana on October 29, 1938 on board the steamship *SS Rotterdam* and stayed for three days. Mackenzie King was accompanied by the founder of Canada's foreign service, Dr. O.D. Skelton. They were greeted at the Havana Pier by the most prominent Canadian in the city, J.K.

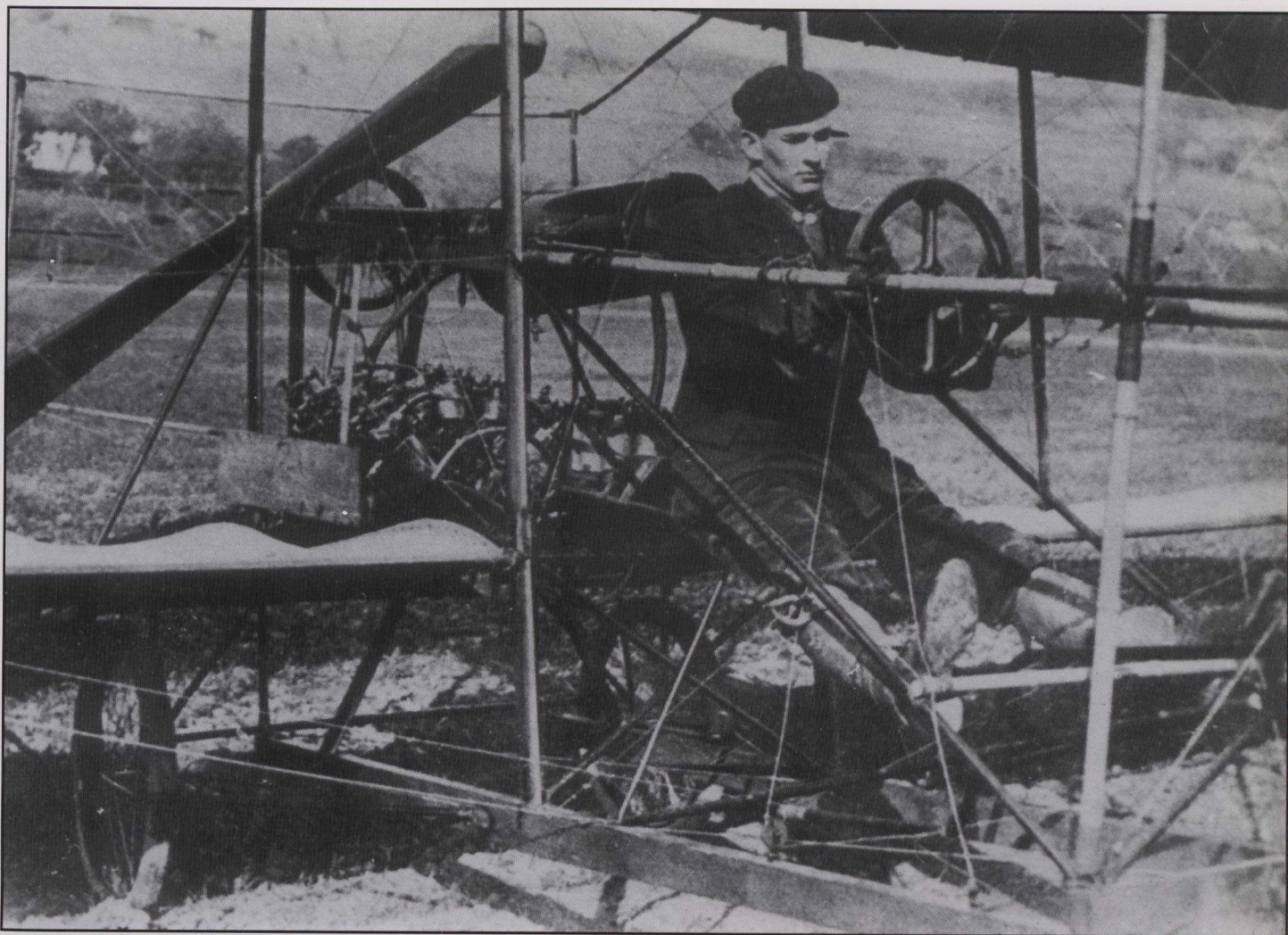
Stewart, Supervisor of the Royal Bank of Canada. King's diaries for Havana that day note:

"I think it is the cleanest city I have ever been in and more beautiful than any other. I should have been very sorry to have missed this glimpse of Cuba."

The Canadian climate, alas, is a deterrent for most Cubans to visit Canada for pleasure; but Cuban students have for years been discovering the peculiar pleasures of a Canadian winter. One of the most distinguished Cubans to have studied in Canada is the Archbishop of Havana, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, who



Prime Minister W.L. MacKenzie King
(third from left) arriving
in Havana, 1938



Canadian aviation pioneer, John McCurdy, in Key West, 1911



The crowd awaiting John McCurdy on the Havana Malecón, 1911



Jaime Ortega with fellow seminarians at Mont Tremblant, 1964

spent four formative years as a student of theology at the Foreign Missions Seminary at Pont-Viau outside Montreal. Jaime Ortega along with three of his fellow Cuban seminarians evidently took up skiing with enthusiasm at the famous Quebec resort of Mont-Tremblant.

Science and a love of Cuba's tropical ecology has been the basis of some great friendships between Cubans and Canadians. One of the foremost figures of Canadian botany was Brother Marie-Victorin, the founder and Director of the Montreal Botanical Garden. In the late 1930s, Marie-Victorin made a series of extensive trips across Cuba with Cuban students and researchers to discover rare plants, such as the living fossil, the endemic cycad *Microcycas calocoma*. Together with a fellow Canadian priest, Brother Léon, who was the director of the Botanical Laboratory of La Salle College in Havana, Marie-Victorin wrote a multi-volume work published in Montreal entitled *Botanical Itineraries in the Island of Cuba*. His contribution to Cuban botany is remembered to this day through the Cuban genus of flowering shrubs, *Victorinia*, named after him by Léon.

In more recent times, a close friendship has been established between the Canadian authors and naturalists, Graeme Gibson and Margaret Atwood, and two senior scientists at Cuba's Museum of Natural Sciences, Gilberto Silva, Cuba's foremost mammal expert, and Orlando Garrido, lead author of the defini-

Gilberto Silva, Margaret Atwood, Orlando Garrido, and Graeme Gibson, Holguín, 2003

tive guide to Cuban birds. Their friendship provided the impetus for World Wildlife Fund to begin its pioneering work with the Cuban government in 1988 to protect the Zapata wetlands. Subsequent donations of equipment and material from Canadian institutions and firms, organized by Graeme Gibson, have helped build the collections and public exhibits of the Cuban Museum of Natural Sciences. Most recently, Atwood and Gibson have established a small international trust fund, CURE, to assist Cuban biologists to carry out field research in their own country and to publish the results of their work.





Botanist J.P. Carabia and Brother Marie-Victorin examining a rare cycad, *microcycas calocoma*, 1939

Contributions de l'Institut Botanique
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ITINÉRAIRES BOTANQUES DANS L'ÎLE DE CUBA

(PREMIÈRE SÉRIE)

PAR

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INSTITUT BOTANIQUE
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL
4101 EST. RUE SHERBROOKE
MONTRÉAL. CANADA

1942

First volume of botany of Cuba, written by Brother Marie-Victorin and Brother Léon, published 1942



Captain Napoleon Bequer receiving trophy from Royal Bank manager R.K. Mennell, Camagüey, 1959

Ramón Castro Ruz with Canadian Commercial Counsellor Christian Lapointe, Bahía de Nipe, 1988

Few businesses seem to inspire as much genuine enthusiasm among people as cattle breeding. The Royal Bank magazine for July/August 1959 records the fascinating photo of a Cattle Fair in Guaimaro, Camagüey, in which the manager of the bank's Camagüey branch, Mr. R.K. Mennell is presenting a trophy to the representative of Cuba's new revolutionary government, Captain Napoleon Bequer, in honour of the prize Cuban bull Cesar. Ramón Castro's devotion to promoting Cuba's cattle herds and the warmth of his hospitality in receiving Canadian cattle breeders over the years is legendary. A picture from the Canadian Embassy archives from 1988

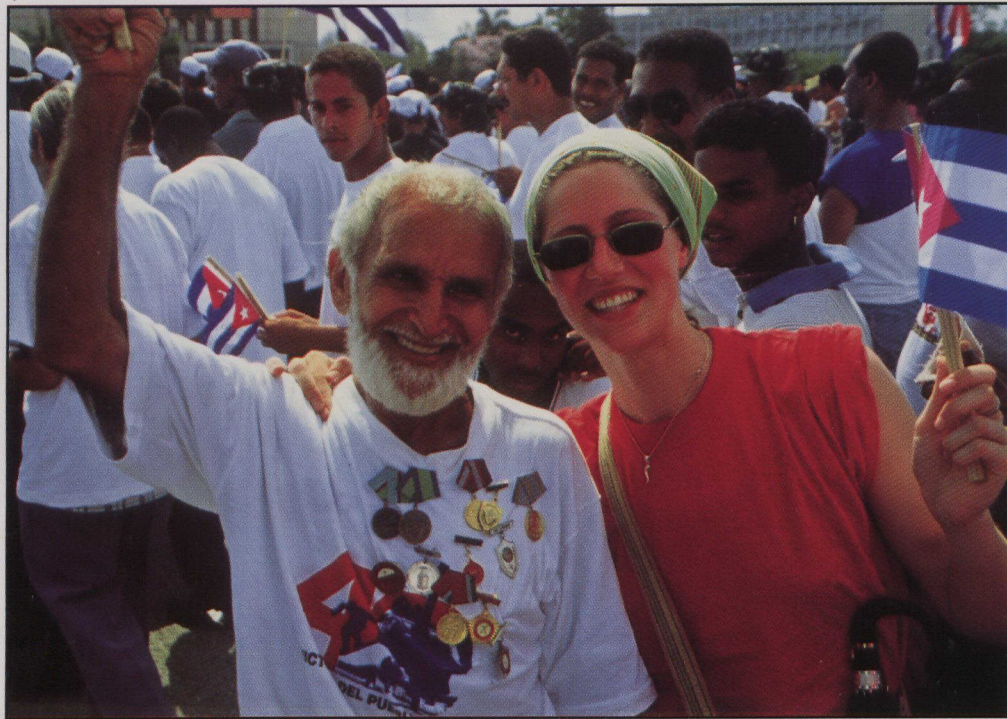
shows two great raconteurs, Ramón Castro himself and the Embassy's Commercial Counsellor at the time, Christian Lapointe, apparently swapping a few cow stories on the deck of a boat cruising in the Bahía de Nipe.





Canada World Youth participants, Jessica Brett McMinn (Alberta), Dafnex Cabrera Padrón (Havana), Valerie Sanderson (Quebec), and Yamia Tamayo Rodriguez (Las Tunas), in Villa Clara, 2003

One program which has made a major contribution to Canadian Cuban friendship in recent times is Canada World Youth. This organization pairs young people between 18 and 22 to live and work together for three months with host families from a different region in each other's country. Canada World Youth's program in Cuba was launched in Cuba in 1996 through the personal support of its founder, Senator Jacques Hébert, and Cuba's Minister of Education, Luis Ignacio Gómez. At the end of the exchange each year in Cuba, all the participants meet to share impressions about what each has learned through the previous six months together: about themselves, each other, and their respective countries.



Cuban and Canadian participants in Havana's May Day parade, 2001

For many years, Cuba has encouraged visits by friendship groups of people of all ages, from around the world, who are interested in learning more about the Cuban Revolution. The annual May Day march is an important moment for Cuba's foreign friends to show their solidarity with the Cuban people. This photograph from the Canada Cuba Friendship Association shows just such an encounter between a Canadian stu-

dent from Queen's University and a Cuban participant at Havana's May Day march in 2001.

Today, the point of contact for the greatest number of Canadians and Cubans is tourism. More than 400,000 Canadian tourists travel to Cuba every year, which means that more than one percent of the entire population of Canada visits the island annually. Two recent Canadian tourists who went the extra mile when they came to Cuba were Heather Harding and Eric Legault, both officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). In 2002 they decided to tie the knot on the sparkling white sands of Varadero.



Wedding of RCMP officers, Heather Harding and Eric Legault, Varadero, 2002

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