

Another region of great concern to Canadian and other Western defence planners is Central Europe. During 1989 and early 1990, this area underwent major political upheaval, and now most of its countries have crossed a divide on the path from Communist rule to multiparty democracy. East Germany has become part of the Federal Republic, and Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary are gravitating increasingly, despite persistent economic difficulties, towards the West European orbit. Romania and Bulgaria have also taken tentative steps towards pluralistic political systems, although for these two countries, as for Yugoslavia and Albania, both the present and future look troubled and uncertain.

A new security situation is emerging in this area as political, military, economic and other relationships evolve. Now that Soviet forces are being withdrawn and the Warsaw Pact has been disbanded as a military alliance, the countries of Central Europe are looking to pan-European institutions and the West to provide them with some measure of reassurance. They are active participants in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) system, and support some degree of institutionalization for this process including the establishment of a headquarters and a small secretariat in Prague. They will also be involved in the European conventional arms control regime if the CFE I treaty is ratified in the next year or so. And they hope that the West European states and NATO will help in some measure to guarantee their independence even if they themselves cannot, at least for the time being, contemplate actual membership in the Atlantic Alliance.

This situation poses a particular challenge to NATO and all its members, including Canada. On the one hand, it is essential for the West not to alienate the Soviet Union or to drive it into reactionary paths by appearing to move in to fill the space that the USSR is now vacating in the central and eastern parts of Europe. On the other hand, the West has a moral obligation to support the establishment and consolidation of democracy in this region, and must not disappoint its peoples and cause them to turn from high aspirations to bitterness, despair and internecine conflict. At the strategic level, also, the West will have to decide between offering guarantees that might introduce undue