

of Canada's trade and economic relations with European countries as well as with other parts of the world. For this reason, Canada has participated actively in the efforts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Group of Ten to contain and resolve difficulties in this field.

## Continuing Division

Both the threat which gave birth to NATO and the response of the alliance have changed radically since 1949. In addition to large conventional forces, the Soviet Union now has a powerful and well-protected nuclear capability, comparable to that of the United States. On the other hand, the Western European members of NATO, which were handicapped in the early years of the alliance by severe internal economic and political problems, have made a remarkable recovery from the effects of the Second World War. The continent as a whole now enjoys a relatively high degree of peace and stability, while wars and lesser conflicts have raged in many other parts of the world. The fundamental reasons for that stability are twofold:

- Over the years there has been developed and maintained a rough balance of military strength between the Communist and Western powers, including the strategic nuclear deterrents of the United States and the Soviet Union, each of which is capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on the other even after absorbing a surprise attack.
- Particularly since the 1962 Cuba crisis, both the United States and the Soviet Union have become increasingly careful about avoiding high-risk situations arising from conflicts in which they are involved on opposing sides (Vietnam, the Middle East), and a tacit understanding between them seems to have evolved that nuclear confrontation should be avoided.

The risk of a deliberate large-scale Soviet attack on Western Europe is therefore much diminished. However, the vital interests of the superpowers remain closely engaged in Europe, and in the face of constant technological and political changes there is no guarantee that the present stability of the balance can be maintained indefinitely. Nor can such a balance be considered a satisfactory long-term solution to Europe's security problems. Essentially it has been the division of Germany and potential instability in countries of Eastern Europe that have held the seeds of crisis capable of developing into a larger conflict. One of NATO's primary military roles is to provide means for containing the escalation of any outbreak