

## Introductory comment

# A YEAR OF CHANGE IN WORLD POWER RELATIONSHIPS

The year 1972 may come to be regarded by future historians as the watershed between the post-war period and an era of new international relationships. This has not, of course, been a sudden development, for the transformation of the world system has been occurring gradually if erratically over the past several years. Images of thaw have recurred—from cold war to *détente*, from bipolarity and rigidity to diversity and fluidity. But 1972 seemed to be a kind of turning point, and the unusual number of dramatic encounters among the leaders of the great powers promises to be of long-term significance for world politics.

Canada stands to benefit from this trend and has helped in some measure to give it momentum. Canada views itself as an Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic nation as well as a nation of the western hemisphere, and in late 1971-72 these dimensions were made evident by the reciprocal visits of the Canadian and USSR prime ministers; by the large trade delegations to China led by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Secretary of State for External Affairs; and by steps to strengthen our relations with the expanded European Community and Japan as well as Latin America. At the same time, Canadian foreign policy has focused more closely than ever before on the international ramifications of such questions of domestic concern as national unity and regional disparities, inflation and unemployment, resource management and the environment. Of particular importance, however, and in the forefront of concern for a great many

Canadians is the question of our present and future relationship with the United States in the light of changing domestic and international circumstances. This has been the subject of difficult negotiations, widespread discussion and comprehensive review.

### On the world scene

The postwar era is now coming to an end. The two superpowers, recognizing a situation of strategic parity, increasingly seek accommodation as new power centres in Europe and Asia emerge to challenge in a number of ways their predominant positions. Indeed the crux of the Nixon Doctrine is an effort to reconcile the United States' international role with this new situation. The Soviet response, while not as sudden or dramatic, also seems to reflect these changes. The European Community and Japan have become global economic powers in their own right, and while the political cohesion of the Community is still in its formative stages and the political role of Japan has yet to be affirmed, both are pursuing new courses of action which would not have been feasible in a more rigid, bipolar world.

China is emerging as a great power in Asia; though still a developing country in many important respects, its potential has been recognized and accepted. For its part, China now seems prepared and even anxious to play an active role in international affairs, particularly as a supporter of those countries which it regards as the underprivileged and the exploited.