



*The new NATO training base at Goose Bay would have a marked and beneficial effect on the economy of settlements such as this one in Central Labrador.*

such as politics, economics and science.

NATO's greatest success however, has been keeping Europe a war-free zone for 40 years. Says Joe Clark, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, 'In assessing the importance of NATO, it is worth noting that Europe is enjoying the longest sustained period of peace and stability since the height of the Holy Roman Empire'

**Mutual defence system**

Canada has played a key role in NATO since the organisation's inception. Convinced that the security of North America and Europe was indivisible, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, Louis Saint-Laurent, put forward the concept of a single mutual defence system in the Canadian House of Commons in April 1948. Part of Saint-Laurent's vision was a transatlantic alliance that would bring together members not only defensively, but also politically, economically, scientifically and culturally.

Canadian representatives vigorously pursued this idea in Europe and the United States. As a result, Article 11 of the North Atlantic Treaty — often referred to as the 'Canadian Article' — reflects

*The Goose Bay base became operational in 1942 with the construction of three 7000-ft runways and an ocean harbour.*



Canada's vision of an alliance enhanced by non-military forms of co-operation. Since that time, Canada's commitment to NATO has been unshakable. In the word of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada's quest for peace and stability 'continues to be best pursued through co-operation with our allies. This is a recognition of our common history, our shared interests and our community of values. This unity of purpose is the very foundation of our Alliance, as important to our security as the concrete efforts we undertake to keep the peace.' Canada's unique geographic circumstances — sandwiched between the two great super-powers — mean national interest in East-West relations is particularly strong. Joe Clark underlined Canada's vulnerability in a speech last Autumn. 'We are in the path between the superpowers', he said. 'Changing our policies does not change our geography and, since we can't wish missiles away, we owe it to our own safety to maintain institutions which control them, or which bring their numbers down.'

But membership in NATO gives Canada more than a voice in the world's nuclear club. Membership is an important component of Canadian credibility in Europe. Joint defence through NATO has also been an economical answer to Canadian defence needs: history shows that it is infinitely more costly to fight a war than to act co-operatively to prevent one.

**Changes in Soviet Union**

Today, changes in the Soviet Union and its allied states are altering the tone of East-West dialogue. President Gorbachev's actions in human rights and arms control have brought the world to a historic juncture. The two superpowers have agreed to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons and have made significant progress on a treaty to reduce their nuclear arsenals by approximately 50 per cent. A new sense of purpose is evident in negotiations to ban entirely chemical weapons. Perhaps most importantly, new negotiations on conventional arms, aimed at establishing a secure and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels, are now under way in Europe.

Encouraged by the progress of arms negotiations, Canada sees an unprecedented opportunity for NATO to forge a more stable international environment. Popular opinion in the West has tended to focus on reducing nuclear weapons, but Canadian analysts share concerns over the significant imbalance between conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact countries and those of NATO.

Negotiations to reduce both nuclear and conventional forces have never had a better chance for success.

With NATO now in its 41st year, Canadians applaud its many successes, the enduring vitality of the organisation and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The peace it has achieved has contributed much to Canada's well-being and confidence in the future. NATO still has a major role to play in ensuring that peace is maintained. ❁