

THE GERMANIES

"This is all repair work of the cold war."

*Michael Sturmer, German historian
International Affairs Research Institute*

The Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev has been the author and catalyst of the end of the cold war; the unification of the Germanies is its most dramatic geo-political consequence. It was in Germany, and more precisely in Berlin, that the line between East and West was drawn most graphically; the iron curtain was, in fact, an ugly cement block wall. The dramatic breaching of the Berlin Wall last November 9, and now its permanent dismantling, marks the end of the cold war as we have known it.

During our four day visit to East Berlin, West Berlin and Bonn, the Committee had a series of meetings with government officials, representatives of the business community and foreign policy analysts. We will briefly describe our findings and recommendations with regard to the two major elements of the process of unification, the internal and the external.

Internal Aspects

We were told that the March 11 elections in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) effectively settled the matter of the future of the Germanies; the East Germans voted overwhelmingly for rapid unification. The first step will consist of monetary, economic and social union via state treaties between the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), with July 2 as the deadline for ratifying these treaties. Without getting into the details, they consist of a monetary union, with generous terms for converting the East German currency into Deutschemarks, and the wholesale application of West German social and economic legislation to East Germany. While the process is moving ahead rapidly, both the speed and the terms of union have generated considerable apprehension and controversy.

Some East Germans fear that positive features of their society, such as certain social programs and forms of solidarity, may be lost in the merger with a very different and much larger West German society. Their greatest fear is of massive unemployment and other economic dislocations that may follow unification because, as we heard repeatedly, East German industry is far less efficient than West German. Dr. Rudiger Puf of the German