

# THE END OF HISTORY? NYET!

While American pundits argue about whether the future will be boring or not, events in Eastern Europe promise interesting times. Perhaps the right people aren't paying attention.

BY FEN OSLER HAMPSON

**T**HE FOREIGN POLICIES OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS are in disarray as officials wrestle with the thorny implications of developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Barely a day passes without news of economic reform, political change, ethnic unrest, demands for autonomy, or refugees fleeing repressive governments. History is again on the march at a dizzying pace. So dramatic are these developments that most knowledgeable observers and pundits have been caught off guard.

Into this vacuum recently stepped Francis Fukuyama, deputy-director of policy planning in the US Department of State (and former analyst at the Rand Corporation), with an article entitled "The End of History?", published in *The National Interest* last summer. Fukuyama's article has generated widespread debate – a debate which is long overdue as the West grapples with the momentous changes taking place in the Eastern bloc. But Fukuyama's answers are less than satisfactory and he displays a surprising lack of concern about the implications of these changes for Western security interests. His views can be summarized as follows.

- The 20th Century is ending with the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." This "triumph" of Western thinking manifests itself in the "total exhaustion" of communism and socialism.
- Recent events in China and the Soviet Union "have put the final nail in the coffin of the Marxist-Leninist alternative to liberal democracy.... What has happened in the four years since Gorbachev's coming to power is a revolutionary assault on the most fundamental institutions and principles of Stalinism."
- The possibility of "large-scale conflict" between "large states still caught in the grip of history" is diminishing as the members of the communist world embrace Western liberal economic and political values.
- The "worldwide ideological struggle" which has gripped humanity for most of this century and that "called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism" will be replaced by "centuries of boredom" – a future governed by

"economic calculations, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands."

ACCORDING TO *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, FUKUYAMA crystallized what many would like to believe, but ignored the rise (and challenge) of Japan. *Time* magazine's Strobe Talbott called the article "The Beginning of Nonsense," and accused Fukuyama of "arrogance" and "short-sightedness." Yes, all of this is true. Just as troubling, however, are the policy implications of Fukuyama's "history is inevitable" thesis.

Fukuyama sees political change as ineluctable and irreversible thereby substituting one kind of historical determinism (neo-Hegelianism?) for another (Marxism-Leninism). This is dangerous thinking and a poor substitute for the inaction of most Western governments in the face of the changes that are occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. There is nothing automatic about recent developments. The modest political and economic reforms achieved by some Eastern bloc countries have been hard won. Still, there is a long way to go and the risk of failure runs high. In the Soviet Union, the depth of political resistance to Gorbachev's reforms suggests, if anything, that he is floundering.

The potential reversibility of recent events urges upon the West the need to formulate an effective political strategy to help consolidate and reinforce liberalizing trends and reforms. The place to begin is not with theories about history but with the right questions:

What will the future of socialism look like – that is to say, what kinds of scenarios can we draw to get some idea of the evolutionary change that may occur in the economies and political systems of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China?

What can the West do to facilitate the reform process? What are the implications of these domestic political and economic reforms for the future of the Warsaw Pact?

What kinds of political and economic reforms in the German Democratic Republic

(GDR) would set in motion irresistible pressures for reunification and how should the West and the Eastern bloc deal with this issue?

What are the implications of current developments and future scenarios for Western security interests and NATO? Is the prospect of military confrontation between the two blocs diminishing as many believe? What factors or forces might derail détente and raise tensions, and how can this be prevented? Where do arms control and defence fit into this broader political picture?

THIS IS A TALL ORDER AND THERE ARE SURELY other issues which should be addressed as well. Unless the West begins to tackle these questions soon it will find itself riding history much like the "headless horseman." Or as Mark Twain once warned, "if you don't know where you are going any road will take you there." Here is a rough guide to the questions just posed.

■ Future prospects. There are a number of different possible scenarios for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as we look towards the future.

*Westernization and democratization.* Hungary is closest to this development with the recent decision to dissolve the communist party and move to a competitive party system. *Latin Americanization.* Here, politics oscillate between repression, democracy, and modernization within an authoritarian tradition. The Soviet Union might follow this path. *Sinification or the China model* – characterized by a strong communist state with a liberal, market-oriented economy. This was communist party leader Jaruzelski's initial vision for Poland. *Ottomanization or Balkanization.* This is sometimes called the Soviet empire's "decomposition scenario" – the result of liberalization, and resurgent ethnicity and nationalism within the Soviet Union and parts of Eastern Europe. *Africanization.* This describes the situation prevalent in some African countries where we see the destruction of the economy and the state, and an inability of key socio-economic groups to take collective action. Indeed, this describes the situation in Poland today.