

In this rapidly changing international scene, the Committee made a recent two week trip to the Soviet Union and to East and West Germany. In choosing these countries to visit we did not in any way intend to diminish the importance to Canada of the other countries of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. However, other Canadian parliamentary groups have visited these countries in the past year and we thought it crucial now to visit the Soviet Union and the Germanies. Under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union is undergoing a second revolution and we wanted to find out for ourselves how reform was faring. The unification of the Germanies is emerging as one of the most important, and potentially positive, geopolitical consequences of the past year. The purpose of this report, then, is to share the findings of our trip, and immediate recommendations, with fellow parliamentarians, the Government and people of Canada.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

We came away from our visit to the Soviet Union impressed by the scale and diversity of the country and, equally, by the depth of its economic and political crises. Many questions of reform remain unresolved. Will they move quickly or slowly towards a market economy? Will the Union transform itself peacefully or fragment into a collection of warring pieces? The main conclusion we would report is of a country likely to be preoccupied for years to come with such fundamental and insistent questions of internal reform.

There is little doubt that the seriousness of the problems faced by the Soviet Union and the intensity of the pressures for change carry with them the risk of breakdown and widespread disorder. Out of this could come a prolonged period of dangerous instability and the cry for a new authoritarianism. But none of this is preordained. Who among us, having witnessed the remarkable changes of the past few years, would now claim to know the future of the USSR? Certainly the rise of open, adversarial politics, should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness, least of all by democratic societies. While multi-party democracy has not yet been established in the Soviet Union, the appearance of challengers to Mr. Gorbachev and the emergence of an articulate civil society are signs of the genuineness of reform. We are greatly encouraged that the Soviet Union is struggling to follow the tangled path leading to democracy.

The visit deepened our conviction that Canada has major long-term interests in closer relations with a reforming Soviet Union. We should have the clarity and steadiness of vision to pursue those interests. To take only one example, the information we received during our visit that the Soviet nuclear test site may be transferred from the far east to the shocked us