

INTRODUCTION

Francis Fukiyama, the U.S. State Department policy analyst, could not have picked a worse year than 1989 to predict that history was over. There has rarely been a year with more history and there is every reason to believe that it has only begun. The 1990s may go down as the decade when history made a comeback.

We are talking of course of the remarkable events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, events which everyone is now proud to concede they did not predict. In this instance, lack of prescience is worn as a badge of honour.

Members of the Committee have a clear reminder of their own groping through these events. In August of last year we issued a discussion paper on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe which asked such questions as—Would Moscow permit non-communist Governments in Eastern Europe? Would the Communist Party of the Soviet Union allow non-communist opposition to spring up? What is the future of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon? Rarely has history been as forthcoming with its answers: yes, yes and very little.

If we were to summarize what we have learned since last summer, it might be as follows: first there was surprise that change was occurring in previously frozen communist regimes; then there was scepticism that the change went very deep or was sustainable; then there was a growing realization that change was profound and sweeping; and finally, speaking of the point we have now reached, there is another question: What can we do to consolidate and build upon this revolution? The question arises from a mixture of hope and fear; hope that the changes of the past few years can be converted into a durable era of peace and international cooperation, fear that the forces released by change could lead to dangerous instability and conflict.

These changes, and the questions to which they give rise, are reshaping Canada's view of the world and having a major impact on our country's foreign policy. For the past forty years, the East-West divide has been the most prominent feature of the international landscape from which we have taken our bearings; our membership in the western community of nations has served as a compass for Canadian policy. Suddenly, in only a few years, the political geography has changed and the polarity of East and West has dramatically weakened. Inevitably, there is some anxiety associated with having to find our way in this newly emerging world, but who can fail to welcome this challenge? The ending of the cold war brings with it the hope of a far less dangerous, and a far more productive and creative, world order.