

The Committee would underscore the recommendation made earlier that Canada should strengthen its trade and diplomatic presence in Germany. A united Germany will become one of the main bridges over which East-West commerce will pass and Canada should be in a position to take advantage of this development.

3. Germany and NATO

There was fairly general agreement among the Germans we met that a united Germany should be a member of NATO, at least for a transitional period. The basic arguments are, first, that given its twentieth century history, a neutral Germany is in no one's interest; and, second, that in this period of rapid change it is essential not to upset the stabilizing influence of NATO. At the same time, many Germans, in both the GDR and the FRG and at various points on the political spectrum, insisted that unification must occur as part of a process of creating a pan-European security system. Dr. Messelwitz, a member of the East German SPD and Parliamentary State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the German Democratic Republic, remarked that many East Germans asked why they should go from the Warsaw Pact into NATO when the money was needed for other things. Nonetheless, he thought that NATO would be necessary for a period of time but that it would have to change profoundly to reflect the new reality and to accommodate the security interests of the Soviet Union. On the latter point he remarked:

“In general, they are very supportive of the wider European approach to security, but they have no idea how to do it. The West should give them constructive ideas, to help the Soviets feel at home. They know that the old system does not work. They are on the losing side, but the West should give them the chance not to feel like losers.”

Two concessions to Soviet security interests that were widely proposed in both the Germanies were that no NATO troops be stationed on what is now East German soil and that, conversely, the 350,000 Soviet troops in the German Democratic Republic be allowed to stay for a transitional period. As Dr. Messelwitz remarked, “we need unconventional solutions or else the divisions of Europe will only be repeated further east.” The argument in favour of Soviet troops remaining in East Germany for a time is especially revealing of the changing East-West relationship. Analysts at the German Institute for Foreign Policy pointed out that, besides reassuring the Soviet's, this would lessen the massive problems associated with the troops and their families returning to an economically depressed Soviet Union. One analyst told us that the return during the past year of Soviet troops from other parts of Eastern Europe, though far fewer in number than the troops based in East Germany, had created serious housing shortages and other problems in some Soviet cities.