

# Our doomsday defence

**W**ar has broken out in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Instead of barrages of shells, however, the two sides are hotly trading salvos of statistics.

Now that both alliances appear to be finally getting serious about troop reductions, the precise numbers on each side assume enormous importance. At the same time, these statistics have become a key weapon in the collateral propaganda war for European public opinion.

On Monday, for the first time ever, the Soviets released figures for their side. Though much lower than NATO estimates, the Soviet data still showed that the Warsaw Pact outnumbered and outgunned NATO by a hefty margin.

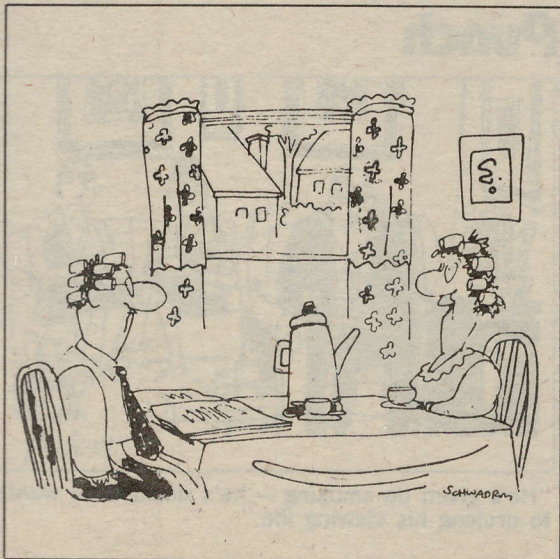
Much of the disparity is caused by definitional problems. Are U.S. carrier strike aircraft to be counted in NATO European totals? Are tanks in storage counted as operational? Curiously, one of the main problems on the NATO side is that our bean counters can't agree on its actual strength. We're pretty sure about the Warsaw Pact but NATO is so complicated that the alliance can't even agree on how many tanks or guns it has.

This debate, which most people will find hopelessly esoteric, will drone on for many more months, or even years. All of the hot air now being expended over arms control has covered up an enormously dismaying fact. Recently the U.S. joint chiefs of staff *admitted* to the secretary of defence that NATO could only hold out against a Warsaw Pact conventional attack for a miserable *seven days* before having to go nuclear.

This is incredible. The U.S. alone spends \$190 billion a year on the defence of Europe. After sinking trillions into Europe over the past decade, the joint chiefs now have the chutzpah to say they can only hold for a week.

As military analyst Benjamin Schemmer

## Punch



"Norbert! I hardly recognized you without your morning paper."

**ERIC MARGOLIS**



recently noted, "the only purpose of U.S. forces in Europe is to shed enough blood in seven days to persuade the president it's time for a nuclear fix."

If a war breaks out in Europe, the U.S. is supposed to airlift or transport by sea a total of six divisions and 60 fighter wings in 10 days. The JCS admit the U.S. utterly lacks the ships or aircraft to perform this vital mission. Buying them would cost \$35 billion or so. So, quite simply, the entire U.S. and NATO strategy for the conventional defense of Europe is a farce — and everyone in the military knows it, starting with the Russkis.

Who's to blame? The Pentagon, for starters, and NATO. Everyone in the West wails and moans about the huge size of Soviet conventional forces. NATO planners quake over their rich lunches over knowledge that Soviet T-80 tanks could reach Rotterdam in a week.

All so true. But rich NATO spends considerably more on defence than down-at-the-heels Russia and its tin-cup allies. We ought to outnumber the enemy. Instead, the Warsaw Pact outnumbers NATO in almost every category.

The fault is not with Russia's bemedalled marshals, but with western politics and idiotic defence planning — or rather, lack of it. The foolish Soviets spend their rubles on dull things like tanks, big guns and submarines. Clever NATO spends it on salaries, powder rooms for female soldierettes, all sorts of hi-tech gizmos that rarely work and nifty office buildings.

Anyone who doubts this should go look at Canada's Armed Forces which have all these useless frills except for the hi-tech gizmos. NATO also pays its soldiers. Canada and the U.S. do so lavishly. Russian soldiers get borscht. Which leaves NATO utterly dependent on its nuclear weapons.

"Don't you dare touch Europe, you swinish Russians," threatens NATO, "or we'll blow it up."

This is strategy? If the artful Mikhail Gorbachev manages to charm away NATO's remaining tactical nuclear weapons, Europe could very well find itself seven days away from studying the Cyrillic alphabet. Unless, as he promises, the Warsaw Pact is really junking its ability to let loose a blitzkrieg on Europe.

Recent military cuts announced by the USSR are a real and important step in this welcome process. We need to see such steps more before dancing in the streets. Instead of continually blasting the Soviets for being so aggressive and threatening, we ought to train our fire on our politicians and generals who have landed Europe in such a fix.

If all these nitwits can tell us is that the only way to defend Europe is by blowing it to smithereens, then they should be looking for new jobs. At the post office.