

NATO IN THE GORBACHEV ERA

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Is peace "breaking out" between the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)? If it is, are multinational security systems required? What should the role of NATO be today, given the

from NATO's Directorate of Information. Despite concerns from student participants that "more people know where Tilley Hall rm. 102 is than know what NATO stands for", this latest entry in the UNB Military and Strategic Studies Program provided the audience with insights into how NATO views its role in the world of today. M. Bareth suggested that NATO today exists in a

to initiate and maintain a dialogue with the WTO and to seek a balance of military forces between the WTO and NATO. M. Bareth contended that, due to the 70% superiority in quantitative military power that the WTO had over NATO in the 1960's and 1970's, the WTO was not interested in carrying on a dialogue because NATO had nothing to offer in exchange for cuts in force levels. However, by 1986, several factors prompted the USSR and the WTO to seriously consider NATO-WTO dialogue; these factors included horribly inefficient state-run economies, the corresponding social problems and most importantly, rebirth of NATO in the 1980's as a credible alliance system. Although attributed to the machinations of Mikhail Gorbachev, the recognition that these factors existed before him actually came on to the political scene earlier and Soviet self denial merely prevented any significant action before him.

NATO's response to this apparent meeting of minds with the WTO has been the resurrection of the two principles of communication and reduction in 1988. These principles express themselves through the Confidence and Security Building Measures agreement, which include dialogue on military strategy



Hungarians removing barbed wire along the Austrian border.



a trainload of Soviet tanks prepares to leave Hungary

apparent moderation within the USSR and WTO? These questions and others formed the basis of a lecture entitled NATO in the Gorbachev Era: Options for the Future of Western Defence given by M. Dominique-Francois Bareth

significant historical era, an era characterized by chance and risk when the alliance deals with the USSR and the WTO. Since 1967, NATO has based its efforts in maintaining collective security and stability for its members on repeated attempts

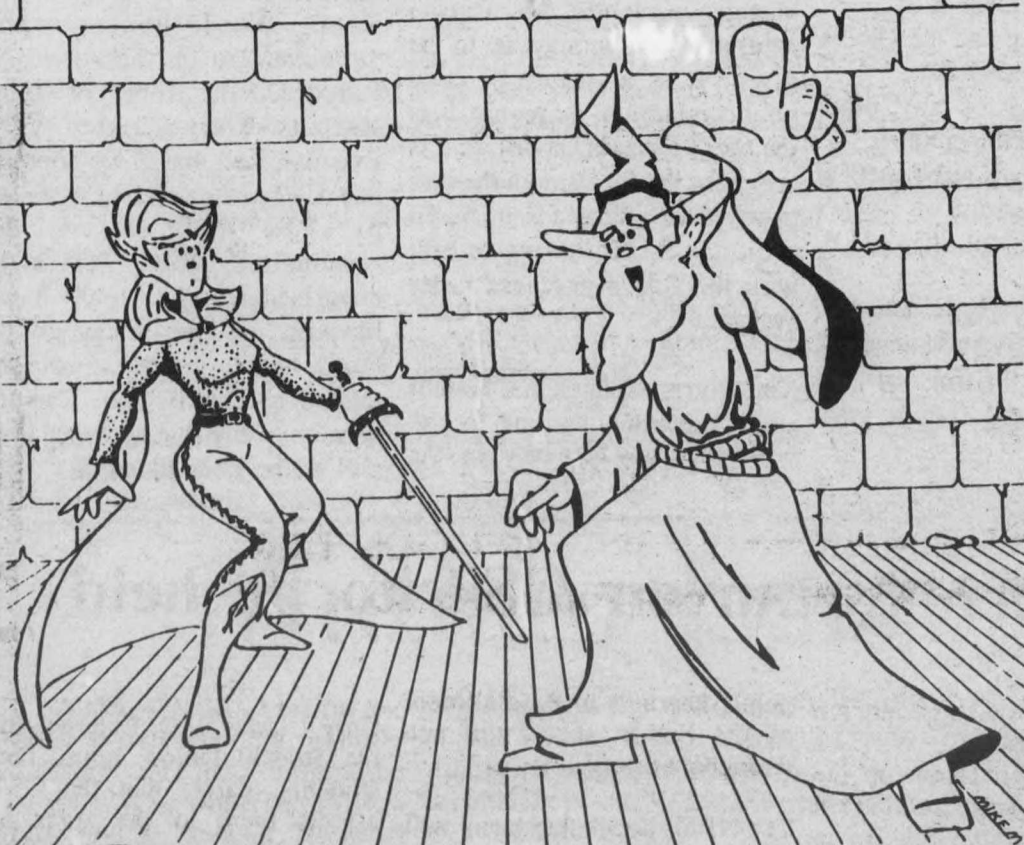
and weapons and the exchange of observers for military exercises; another expression is through the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations which are aimed at reducing the imbalance of conventional forces, significant because the WTO has accepted that such an imbalance exists. Thus, according to M. Bareth, NATO has taken a chance to pursue these options.

The motives of Gorbachev received scrutiny during the discussion and this illustrated the principle of risk that NATO now labours under. M. Bareth repeatedly emphasized that Gorbachev's aim is not to create another Western-style democracy as often alleged so by our media, but to reform the WTO, albeit along Leninist lines. NATO's reaction to such reform in the USSR was complete disbelief at first, then acceptance. However, no one

can predict the probability of survival for Gorbachev and his reforms and the situation is still not clear. One possible scenario includes the removal of Gorbachev in an internecine power struggle with conservatives and a return to Breznevian policies.

It is because of this uncertainty that NATO is arguably more necessary than ever. Previously, the tension between NATO and WTO has been such that all nations knew where the others stood geopolitically. Now, we live in a time of uncertainty and paradox, where there is a more open relationship between the WTO and NATO but the potential for instability within the WTO block is dangerously high. NATO provides the West with an insurance policy that promotes change and openness, as well as maintaining security and stability.

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