

are added, the totals are as follows: NATO — 143; the Warsaw Pact — 181.

These totals are relatively close to the figures for the “Atlantic to the Urals” zone given in the first table of this paper. They are not exactly the same because the counting system has been changed. The first table includes more NATO forces, such as the French divisions stationed at home in France. The reinforcement divisions have also been divided into two groups, and those already manned have been included among the active divisions. This shows some of the complexity of counting military forces in a true and realistic fashion.

BEHIND THE FIGURES

The numbers tell only part of the story. They try to show the conventional military forces now in place in various parts of Europe or those that could be mobilized in a crisis and sent to the European theatre. They do not enable us to predict which of the two sides would have the most conventional forces available on this or that battlefield if fighting broke out next week or, say, in a year's time.

Trying to calculate the balance of conventional forces in possible future East-West conflicts in Europe depends as much on the assumptions we make about the geographic location of fighting, about political decision-making, about timing, about types of military action, and so on, as it does on sheer numbers. Military planners and arms control experts are well aware of this, and use a range of models to examine the situation, where they can change the assumptions and see what effects that will produce. In addition, they work out different scenarios about a conventional war in Europe, and use these to try to see which side might gain the advantage. A scenario is like a novel or the script of a play. It shows what could conceivably happen in a crisis or wartime, depending on the development of the situation.

There are several major questions that military planners have to face when they think about possible future conflicts. Firstly, how much warning would there be, and where would the war start? The crisis might develop on the Central Front, but equally it could start in the Caucasus, on the border between the Soviet Union and Turkey, or in the Balkans as a result of some upheaval in Yugoslavia or a conflict between Greece and Bulgaria. The first military moves in a war might take place in Scandinavia, with a Soviet attempt to seize North Norway, thus diverting NATO's attention to the complex sea-air-land military balance in the North. Or there could be a new crisis in Berlin, spreading civil unrest and upheavals in Eastern Europe, or a new war in the Middle East which somehow dragged in the NATO and Warsaw Pact powers. The range of possibilities is extensive and each would have its own special impact on the location of fighting in the

early stages of a conflict.

A second major question is who would join in the fighting when a battle actually started. Usually it is assumed that all the NATO countries and all the Warsaw Pact states would commit their armies to action as soon as a major war broke out, but sometimes doubts are expressed about this or that country. For example, in one recent, vivid novel about an East-West war, John Clancy's *Red Storm Rising* — an excellent example of a scenario — it is assumed that Greece would stay out of the war. Because France has publicly insisted on taking its own national decisions about declaring war in any future conflict, some analyses start from the assumption that France would not participate. Often questions are raised about the reliability of the Soviet Union's East European allies: would the Polish or Czechoslovak armies, for example, fight against NATO forces if the conflict had grown out of some massive domestic upheavals which had brought the near-collapse of authority, and civil war, to parts of Eastern Europe.

Additionally, it is not certain that a war between East and West in Europe, if it came, would necessarily be waged across the length and breadth of the continent. It might be waged within certain geographic bounds, for example on the Central Front or in the Balkans. Most allied countries would probably send some reinforcements, but the critical military balance would be that between the forces in, or committed to, that particular area. Alternatively, a war might escalate rapidly, before many conventional forces had been brought into action, as one side or the other resorted quickly to the use of nuclear weapons.

Another key question is how well the decision-making process would work among the allies on the two sides. The Western Alliance is a grouping of independent, democratic states, which do not always see eye to eye about the dangers which may be confronting them. Would the process of political consultation in NATO headquarters or among allied capitals work sufficiently quickly and surely to allow NATO commanders to respond effectively in a crisis? On the Eastern side, too, there might be hesitations or objections by various leaders which would have a major impact on the course of a war.

Differing views about the readiness of regular and reserve forces can also have substantial effects on assessments about the conventional military balance. For example, there are serious divergences among experts about the state of many Warsaw Pact divisions. These are normally divided into Categories I, II and III, by order of readiness, and a key question is how soon the Category III group, especially, could be brought up to full strength and made ready for battle. Some analysts think this could be done in two or three weeks, but others argue that it would normally take at least three months. Obviously this point is very important