

# Spetsnaz: The Soviet special forces arrayed against the West

by Luba George

High-level European and other Western intelligence sources have recently been stressing the existence and potential deployment of special elite Soviet commando units, known under the acronym *spetsnaz*. The *spetsnaz* (*spetsialnogo naznacheniya*), literally "Special Purpose Forces," are trained in commando tactics, sabotage, and assassination, and are fluent in the languages of the countries where they will be deployed.

The mission of the *spetsnaz* commandos is to destroy key military installations, especially communication and transportation infrastructure, or capture and hold these installations until the advancing Red Army arrives. These missions are all linked to collaboration and logistical support that would be given to the *spetsnaz* by pro-Moscow "fifth column" elements in each country. Similar sabotage and assassination missions are also slated for a "pre-war" phase of operations—for which the Soviets are now mobilizing their nation and their international assets.

## Soviet 'Brandenburg Division'

The *spetsnaz* form a branch of Soviet military intelligence (GRU) under a joint directorate of military intelligence and the KGB, and were set up before World War II as motorized infantry units of the NKVD, as the KGB was then called. They are the Soviet equivalent of Nazi Germany's Abwehr Brandenburg Division commando units which were sent behind enemy lines just before the outbreak of fighting on each front. During the Nazi regime and especially during the period of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the Abwehr and then "*spetsnaz*"-GRU worked closely together, prefiguring the present-day collaboration between the Swiss-based Nazi International (which includes successors to the Abwehr's nationalities sections) and the Soviet KGB.

Starting with a Soviet defector's account of *spetsnaz* training and activity, published in the September 1983 issue of the Swiss *International Defense Review* under the pseudonym "Viktor Suvorov," several European publications have written on the *spetsnaz* this year. Intelligence agencies are giving this information serious attention, in view of the activation of Soviet-linked terrorists in Europe.

According to Agence France Press, there are over 1,500 elite troops in each *spetsnaz* unit, "specializing in sabotage and assassination of foreign politicians." The news service asserts that there are two main commando training camps in

the Soviet Union, one near Odessa on the Black Sea and the other near Kirovograd, south of Kiev, both in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. *Spetsnaz* units are stationed in East Germany (GDR), Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the three Warsaw Pact states directly bordering the West. French sources report that *spetsnaz* units based in Romania are trained for missions against France in war or near-war situations.

The West German newspaper *Die Welt* disclosed that there are between 1,200 and 1,500 such Soviet commandos in the GDR alone, stationed at four bases: one near Cottbus, southeast of Berlin; one near Prenzlau, northwest of Berlin; one north of Berlin; and the fourth at an undisclosed location. Both the GDR and Bulgaria have their own highly trained units analogous to Soviet *spetsnaz*.

## 'The spetsnaz are already there'

Suvorov's report emphasized that *spetsnaz* forces include agents who stake out, or even settle in, the target countries long before an outbreak of hostilities. Soviet sports teams traveling abroad, comprised of top athletes from the Central Army Sports Club, are a common cover for *spetsnaz* missions, he wrote.

Historically, every advance or invasion of the Red Army has been preceded by *spetsnaz* commando operations. This was their function in World War II under the command of NKVD Major Gen. Pavel Sudoplatov, who coordinated sabotage and assassination operations, together with Soviet and communist partisans, in Nazi-occupied Europe.

*Spetsnaz* units played a crucial role in the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979.

In Czechoslovakia, these units seized key installations in Prague (including the airport) and arrested Czechoslovak party chief Dubcek and his colleagues. Selected detachments aided in the pro-Soviet coup of April 1978 in Afghanistan, which overthrew the Daoud regime, and these Soviet special forces units led the assault on the Presidential Palace in Kabul Dec. 27, 1979, killing President Hafizullah Amin, and installed the current Soviet puppet, Babrak Karmal.

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan two days later, *spetsnaz* deployed to seize airfields and other key installations before the regular troops arrived. These Soviet units, stationed in Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan, could potentially be used in advance of a Soviet military move into

Iran or for commando operations against Persian Gulf oil facilities.

These units also function now, as in the past, as a Praetorian Guard for the Kremlin leadership. For example, during World War II, an NKVD motorized infantry unit was responsible for defending the Kremlin in case the Wehrmacht advance was not stopped and German Army units penetrated to Moscow.

### Spetsnaz deployments of 'truck drivers'

A key element in the Kremlin's spetsnaz operation, many sources stress, is the deployment of truck drivers from Eastern Europe, especially the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, and the GDR. These truck drivers have been identified by Western intelligence services as constantly involved in the following areas of illegal activities:

- weapons-smuggling in sealed trucks;
- transportation of illegal espionage equipment and Western money to fund subversive movements and agents;
- espionage, including "scouting" military and logistical installations on the spetsnaz sabotage "hit list";
- assassination and kidnapping operations.

According to the French magazine *Le Point*, there has been a huge increase in Bulgarian truck traffic in the West between 1980 and 1982. The same increase in GDR trucks traveling through West Germany has been observed in the same period.

### Assassination attempt on Helga LaRouche

*EIR* investigators of the September 1981 vehicular homicide attempt against European Labor Party (EAP) Chairman Helga Zepp-LaRouche—which security services have confirmed was a professional operation—find it no mere coincidence that the driver who forced her car off the Autobahn near Hannover was a "professional truck driver" who had "fled" from the GDR to the West.

The intended victim and her husband, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche, have been classified as the primary individual, strategic enemies of Moscow since March 1983, when U.S. President Reagan adopted aspects of LaRouche's proposed defensive anti-nuclear missile (beam weapons) policy. Moscow made its fear of LaRouche and the effects of his policy proposals clear when *Izvestia*, official daily of the Soviet government, carried an attack naming LaRouche and Reagan for promoting U.S. development and development of beam-weapons in its Nov. 15 issue. Five days later, on Nov. 20, the same paper carried an article hysterically denying the existence of the spetsnaz, and attacking Western reports on the spetsnaz.

The official investigation into the attempted murder of Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche was dropped. In France, investigations into Bulgarian trucking in Western Europe and related weapons-smuggling operations have also been dropped. The smell of "fifth column" support for spetsnaz activities permeates repeated refusals to undertake even minimal and standard security investigations of these incidents.

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