
WARSAW PACT

Secret maneuvers held in East Germany

by Konstantin George

Secret military maneuvers were conducted in East Germany in mid-February by over 60,000 Soviet and East German troops. Four divisions, including the Soviet 21st Guards-Motorized Division, were deployed, according to West-East News (WONA), a West Berlin-based press agency. The maneuvers, not acknowledged for "diplomatic" reasons by the Bonn government, constitute the crassest violation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords on Cooperation and Security in Europe (CSCE) by the Soviets since its signing. Under the Helsinki accords, it is mandatory to announce 30 days in advance the timing, location, purpose, and size of maneuvers of such scale. These maneuvers also show what the Soviets really think of the current talks on "Confidence-Building Measures" in Stockholm.

The main purpose of these talks from Bonn's standpoint, silly but psychologically revealing, is to "prevent" a Soviet surprise attack on the Federal Republic by means of treaties and notifications governing military maneuvers, operations, and troop movements. Bonn has nightmares over this likelihood, and is attempting utterly illusory "solutions" in trying to legislate the danger out of existence. Bonn's concern was made public in January statements issued to the Bonn *Wehr-Report* by Defense Ministry State Secretary Lothar Rühl on the danger of Soviet surprise attack.

What alarmed Western analysts was that, one month after Rühl's warning, the character of the secret maneuvers held in East Germany was a dress rehearsal for a lightning surgical strike into the Federal Republic. According to WONA, "Two of the divisions, practicing an advance to the West, conducted a parallel and simultaneous crossing of the Elbe," a wide and deep river, at the stretch of the Elbe north of Magdeburg and the Mittellandkanal (which runs West-East from Hannover region to Berlin), and south of Lauenburg, the beginning of the stretch where the Elbe forms the West German-East German border. In the triangle of land bounded by the Elbe, the Mittellandkanal, and the West German-East German land border between Oebisfelde and Lauenburg, lies the Letzlinger Heath, close to the border, and one of the largest military exercise maneuver areas in East Germany.

These maneuvers occurred after a big increase in the number of secret Soviet and East German Air Force maneuvers and increased training flights, including many held at

night and in very bad weather, where, according to WONA, the planes would normally be grounded. The news agency states that one by-product of this big step-up in maneuvers under combat and bad-weather or nighttime "surprise attack" conditions, has been sharp increases in combat-plane crashes. At least six Warsaw Pact aircraft crashed in East Germany in December and another five in January. The maneuvers involved more than tactical aircraft units; one of the confirmed December crashes involved a Soviet Medium Bomber, flying into East Germany from a base in the Soviet Union, which crashed near Schwedt on the border between East Germany and Poland.

The mid-February exercises in East Germany followed announced maneuvers held by Soviet, Czech and Hungarian troops in northern Czechoslovakia on Feb. 7-12. Ongoing the second week of March are maneuvers of Soviet, East German, and Polish troops in Pommern, northern Poland, called "Friendship 84." In March begin the "Soyuz 84" staff maneuvers in the Balkans, involving the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.

Soviets warn Denmark

The Soviets are now establishing the pretext to attack and occupy the large Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic off the coast of Poland. Out of the blue, on Feb. 22 the Soviet military daily *Red Star* attacked Denmark for permitting NATO to "use the strategically placed island of Bornholm for reconnaissance plane stopovers." *Red Star* "reminded" the Danes that Bornholm "was liberated" by Soviet troops "in May 1945 from the fascist German occupiers." The Soviet troops were withdrawn in March 1946, under the condition that "Denmark would not let 'any foreign troops or administrators'" take control of the island. Concluding the case for invasion, *Red Star* warns that NATO using the island for reconnaissance planes would be a "gross violation" of the 1946 Soviet-Danish understanding. The "Friendship 84" maneuvers are occurring along the Baltic Coast, opposite Bornholm.

Behind the intimidating military maneuvers and the wave of threats to invade, the Soviet military hardware strategic buildup goes on relentlessly. According to the London *Daily Express*, American spy satellites have discovered the construction of a new Soviet SS-20 missile base of nine launchers, "close to western Europe." West German military sources confirmed the report and reported the location of the base to be on the Baltic island of Oesel, off the coast of Estonia. Oesel, like the neighboring large island of Dagoe, is heavily militarized to begin with, and both islands have long been closed to travelers and foreigners. This brings the total of SS-20 launchers facing Western Europe to a confirmed 252, plus another 144 in the Soviet Far East. In one of the understatement of the week, the *Daily Express* commented: "The discovery has dealt a serious blow to Western hopes of a new dialogue with the Soviet Union."

It's better to wake up late than too late.