

Soviet maneuvers in East Europe: an analysis

by Uwe Henke von Parpart

In late June and early July of this year, as previously reported in this journal, the Soviet Union conducted the largest integrated maneuvers of the Red Army on the territory of its Warsaw Pact "allies" since World War II. These maneuvers, stretching from the Baltic Sea through East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia down to Hungary, took place in the presence and under the direct command of the top Soviet military leadership of Defense Minister Marshal Dmitrii Ustinov and Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

While initially only scantily reported or misleadingly minimized in their significance by most of the Western press, some analysis of these maneuvers has recently been produced by certain Western military experts, and by NATO command.

Potential deception

What prompts the writing of my own commentary on this matter is that this now published Western expert opinion, while valuable in certain regards and signaling an albeit belated recognition of the massive increase of the Soviet military threat in Europe, is nonetheless misled or misleading in several key points. It ignores in particular the element of *potential strategic deception*; by stressing an alleged "conventional" (non-nuclear) weapons orientation in these maneuvers simulating a high-speed surprise attack on the Federal Republic of Germany (and Austria), it can become actively and dangerously misleading.

Talk of Soviet "conventional" orientation or preference, unless carefully qualified as applying only to highly singular and limited cases and events, plays directly into the Soviet overall strategic gameplan by reinforcing the illusion of a

"conventional" defense of Europe, motivating massively stepped-up "self-reliant" European efforts in this regard, and increasingly questioning both the need for and the dependability of the U.S. strategic nuclear guarantee of the integrity of the territory of the Western European NATO allies.

This, of course represents the familiar "New Yalta" decoupling (of Western Europe from the United States) strategy of the Lord Carrington-Henry Kissinger group, as well as of certain "conservative" circles in West Germany who seek a German arrangement with the Soviet Union exclusive of the United States.

Is NATO fooled?

It may not have been the intention of Adalbert Weinstein, military expert of the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, to play into this strategy when he analyzed the Soviet maneuvers in the Aug. 5 issue of *Welt am Sonntag*. (See box) Still, his otherwise valuable piece has precisely this implication when he writes:

"Everything points to this, that in the case of actual outbreak of war [*im Ernstfall*], the Soviets will attempt to force the *strategic decision* [emphasis added] before NATO can bring into play tactical nuclear weapons. The so-called first strike [Weinstein's terminology; in NATO parlance "first use"] of the West is intended to be undercut. The for-now only convincing element of deterrence available to the West is intended to be eliminated." (*Welt am Sonntag*, Aug. 5, 1984, p. 2)

Undercut and eliminated presumably by a rapid, "conventional" surprise strike on the part of Soviet forces. And

NATO command analysis as reported in the *Air Force Times* (Aug. 9) is entirely unambiguous in this regard:

“The Soviet ‘Operational Maneuvers Group’ (OMG) is a division-sized formation of armor supported by heliborne forces. Injected deep into Western territory during the first day of any conflict, it would spread like a cancer to attack such vital defense nodes as command posts, airfields, and nuclear weapons sites.”

So, there you have it! The Soviet Union has reorganized and tested its forces so that on “X-Day” “conventional” rapid strike groups will invade West Germany, take out high priority targets and the strategic decision will have been forced before the West has had a chance to react with its nuclear potential.

I shall demonstrate that from a military standpoint, this is dangerous nonsense and that such a sequence of events becomes possible only if certain political circumstances come to prevail—precisely the kind of circumstances indicated by a “New Yalta” deal and de facto “ratified” by, say, a Mondale presidency.

It is also unfortunate that further credence is given to such alleged Soviet military schemes by some loose talk about a so-called “revolution” in Soviet tactics, the adoption of “blitzkrieg”-style notions, etc. Mainly, such talk has been generated by Edinburgh University’s John Erickson in his commentary on an otherwise interesting series of 1976/77 papers on “high speed offensive” in the Soviet military journal *Voyennyi Vestnik*. Analysis of this paper leads to conclusions different from Erickson’s preferred interpretation.

Some fundamentals

To gain a proper and reliable understanding of the latest Soviet maneuvers, and associated military moves, let us sort things out carefully by recalling some fundamentals of military strategy and tactics under present conditions.

First, as things stand now and in the foreseeable future, a “conventional” defense of Western Europe against a full-scale Warsaw Pact forces’ attack is impossible. Neither precision-guided munitions or a proliferation of sophisticated anti-tank weapons have changed or will change this. Nor do certain numbers games, projecting that NATO conventional-forces increases will bring the Warsaw Pact/NATO ratio below the magical 3:1 ratio allegedly required for successful attack.

Such static ratios are relatively meaningless. Military operations occur in space and time, and even at much lower *average* ratios, concentration of attack forces at specific points with even 10:1 advantages is possible. (You might call this the “laser effect” in analogy to a comparison of the “action potential” of a laser and a light bulb of equal energy output.)

The crucial time factor then indicates that in the narrow space available for defensive operations, NATO will have no time to properly redeploy and reinforce. The NATO nuclear arsenal is indispensable for successful defense and the un-

ambiguous commitment to its use is the indispensable cornerstone of deterrence.

Second, we should acknowledge that this is the rather obvious state of affairs and therefore obviously known to the Soviets. So why should they even contemplate committing major combat units to “conventional” attack if these would certainly be hit by nuclear fire?! It would be the height of military stupidity and irresponsibility and, we should add, runs counter to *every* piece of Soviet military writing concerning their own doctrine and training from Sokolovskii to the latest available and relevant 1982 and 1983 pieces in *Voyennyi Vestnik*.

The OMG

These basic points once established, let us now take a closer look at the recently celebrated Soviet “Operational Maneuvers Group” (OMG), and “new” “blitzkrieg” tactics and try to understand their significance.

Contrary to Erickson and his American epigones, following as usual in the tow of authoritative British opinion, it is certainly not some new Soviet preference for “conventional” means or belief in the attainability of their strategic objectives without recourse to nuclear weapons. Nor have the Soviets, as the terminology “new,” “blitzkrieg” tactics implies, given up their concept or preparation for protracted war even in a nuclear environment. Deplorably, such “analysis” is not only voiced by Erickson-style academic “specialists”; since his U.S. co-thinkers like John Hines and Phillip A. Petersen—authors, for example, of a 1983 *Orbis* article on “The Conventional Offensive in Soviet Theater Strategy” (*Orbis*, No. 3, Fall 1983)—have considerable input into official U.S. Defense Department opinion, it ended up being attributed to Secretary Weinberger in the March 1983 issue of *Soviet Military Power* (luckily, and hopefully intentionally, this bit of spurious analysis was not repeated in the 1984 version).

“The Soviets believe that successful OMG operations could severely disrupt the NATO rear area, thereby increasing the likelihood of maintaining a rapid advance without early resort to nuclear war. Operationally, the OMG would facilitate commitment of reinforcements by securing terrain over which additional Soviet forces could pass, while hindering NATO’s efforts to reinforce its forces. Additionally, although the OMG concept has been developed for conventional offensive operations, it is also well suited for exploitation of nuclear strikes.”

It is the last parenthetical thought in this quote that is most critically relevant. The combined-arms OMG formation reflects a most appropriate military-organizational adjustment to the special demands for high mobility and relative independence of operational action of combat in a nuclear battlefield environment.

As evidenced in the recent summer maneuvers, the Soviet have also made certain other adjustments to advances in military technology. The most notable is a renewed major

emphasis on artillery fire power (including nuclear) for suppression, in particular, of anti-tank defense that might otherwise hamper rapid tank column progress. Indeed, the formerly predominant role of the Chief of Tank Troops has been eclipsed by the new central role for the Commander of Missile Troops and Artillery.

But let me repeat: what we see here is not some “new blitzkrieg”-style tactical revolution. The emphasis on the high-speed offensive is at least as old as Tukhachevskii’s 1935-36 preventive attack plan on Nazi Germany. Technology changes and ever more refined analysis of the requirements of combat in a nuclear environment have prompted significant Soviet organizational, operational, and personnel adjustments since the mid-1970s.

Blatant intimidation

In light of the above points, the lessons that should be drawn from the recent Soviet maneuvers are as follows:

1) In the last decade, especially since the ascendancy of Marshal Ogarkov to the position of Chief of General Staff in 1977, the Soviet Union has massively improved its overall military strategic might. The summer maneuvers ostentatiously and for the purpose of blatant intimidation—both of Soviet “allies” and potential adversaries—demonstrated that point for the first time in such concentration with regard to ground forces and integrated arms.

2) A major element of strategic deception was involved in these maneuvers to the extent that it succeeded in prompting Western analysts to focus their attention almost exclusively on the “conventional” aspects of the high speed offensive.

3) The Soviets have demonstrated their ability to launch a major offensive without large-scale obvious logistical preparation [aus dem Stand]. This, in particular, would also prepare them for a limited-objective “surgical” strike into West German NATO territory and be able to “make it stick” without requiring lengthy preparation.

Such a limited strike might very well be “conventional” if the political circumstances are right (see above) and permit it. But let us not fall for a moment for the “conventional preference” doctrine. This would be a “political” preference, not a military one.

There is no ‘third way’

How do we deal with this situation? In its present Great Russian imperial mode, the Soviet Union will look in all directions and will exploit every opportunity and every inch of ground conceded to it—both politically and militarily. So, we shall not cede ground; but if we misinterpret or misrepresent their military moves and deployments, that is precisely to play into their hands.

There is not now nor will there be in the foreseeable future

The Soviet war maneuvers

Military analyst Adalbert Weinstein presented a comprehensive rundown of the recent Soviet troop maneuvers in Eastern Europe, in the West German weekly *Welt am Sonntag* Aug. 5. Weinstein is a journalist accredited to NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Weinstein asks: “Are the Soviets preparing a war mobilization? Or are they testing their changed strategic planning?” He then describes “some peculiarities of the Russian maneuvers of this year,” such as the fact that on July 3, an air-landing division which came straight from Russia was landed at Jueterbog, or that all land forces involved in the maneuvers were equipped with new weapons. “Gunship combat units were deployed whose task it is to take NATO missile bases by surprise in case of war,” he writes.

The maneuver routes the troops took point to the following operational tasks, Weinstein states: “Cutting Schleswig-Holstein from West Germany, occupying all North Sea ports including the Dutch and Belgian bases on

the Channel, carrying forward rapid thrusts into the Fulda/Frankfurt region.

“Everything points to this, that in the case of actual outbreak of war, the Soviets will attempt to force the strategic decision before NATO can bring into play tactical nuclear weapons. The so-called first strike of the West is being preempted.”

Weinstein describes the surveillance which detected spetsnaz (special commando force) sabotage units in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, and in Hungary close to the Austrian border. According to CIA reports, there is also a massive increase of ammunition production in the area around the East German city of Ohrdruf, where the 8th Soviet Guard Army is stationed, and in Poland.

“Experts evaluating such intelligence point to parallels to the period of tensions which ended with the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Observers of domestic Soviet events are said to have noticed a certain nervousness among the Russian military. Even for the current harvest, the armed forces did not provide trucks; similar things happened only back in 1968.”

Having described the Soviet war preparations in detail, Weinstein then concludes hopefully that “none of this should be considered a prelude to war in Europe.”

a credible alternative to the “first use” NATO doctrine. We can escape the dilemma of defending Europe only by being prepared to destroy it, only to the extent that the early deployment of the Strategic Defense Initiative’s defensive systems provide an alternative. There is no “third way.”

Documentation:

‘German revanchists beware’

Kommunist, the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published the threatening article by V. Nekrasov which we excerpt here, “Look Out Revanchism!” in issue No. 9, June 1984.

Revanchism is raising its head anew on West German soil. If taken in isolation, perhaps, this phenomenon of scum on the surface of the complex socio-political life of the country would not deserve serious attention. . . . If behind it there were not to be discerned the actions of forces which are extremely important, and malicious in their intentions; if its appearance testified merely to attempts to galvanize the notorious “German spirit,” which suffered crushing collapse 40 years ago and which has nothing in common with the understandable national feelings of the German people.

In reality, what concretely can they expect to gain, all these, as they are justly called, “eternally yesterday’s men,” who are dreaming about the return to the bosom of the capitalist system of the irreversibly lost “Eastern territories,” or about the “living space,” which the rotted Führer promised them? . . .

Today, Europeans, justifiably alarmed by the noisy “statements of will” of all these “Silesians,” “Pomeranians,” “Prussians,” and whatnot that have floated up out of non-existence, are being soothed with assurances that a few million “expellees” allegedly represent nobody but themselves. But who then, if you please, is represented by the 44 deputies in the Bundestag, who are members of revanchist organizations? Or in whose name does the Bundestag come out with a declaration on relations between the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] and the GDR [German Democratic Republic], which, as *Neues Deutschland* observed, is “chock-full of revanchist appeals?” . . .

It is becoming clear in the course of events, that what is involved is a maneuver of strategic scope, undertaken with the goal of subverting the whole complex of postwar peace settlements, agreed upon by the main participants in the anti-Hitler coalition—the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain, and France who joined them later.

To put it more precisely—it concerns the principles of Yalta and Potsdam, which have passed the test of time with honor. . . .

There are observations worthy of serious attention contained in the published materials of the Teheran Conference, whose participants—the leaders of the three powers who headed the anti-Hitler coalition—expressed apprehensions about the possible rebirth of German militarism. Thus, in the record of J. V. Stalin’s conversation with U.S. President F. Roosevelt on Nov. 29, 1943, it says: “If nothing restrains Germany, Stalin is apprehensive that Germany will soon be able to rebuild itself. Germany will require only a few years for this. The first great war, launched by Germany in 1870, ended in 1871. Only 42 years after that war, in 1914, Germany began a new war, and in 21 years, in 1939, Germany again began a war. As is evident, the period required for the rebuilding of Germany is becoming shorter.”. . .

NATO faces ‘serious crisis’

The West German daily Die Welt ran this article by Rüdiger Moniac Aug. 8, titled “NATO Must Rethink Its Nuclear Planning”:

Western analysts of the Soviet Union’s foreign and security policy have recently been increasingly inclined toward the view that there has been a shift in Soviet military planning. With the theoretically possible outbreak of war with NATO in Europe, Moscow now plans to destroy NATO’s tactical nuclear potential by means of quick, comprehensive operations. Thus, the Western defensive alliance, which is already no match for the Warsaw Pact in terms of conventional weapons, would also be robbed of its only decisive means to prevent war through deterrence.

NATO’s policy for ensuring peace has always included the threat of the first use of nuclear weapons, which until now has prevented the use of armed might on the part of East or West. But now, experts are of the opinion that NATO is facing a serious crisis in its own military planning.

The debate within NATO has until now been confined to closed-door sessions between officers and politicians. However, a hint of it leaked out last fall, when the European NATO Supreme Commander, the American General Rogers, expressed his dissatisfaction with the Montebello Decision, in which the NATO defense ministers decided to withdraw 1,400 warheads from the European tactical nuclear arsenal. Rogers cast doubt upon the wisdom of this decision during an interview with journalists at the United States’ NATO embassy in Brussels.

In principle, the general did not oppose a reduction of NATO’s short-range nuclear potential (TNF). But he said

that such a reduction should be preceded by a rational analysis, which had not been adequately conducted before the Montebello Decision. Rogers reported that such an analysis of the operative tasks of TNF weapons was currently being prepared by SHAPE headquarters. Only in March 1985 would he be able to present the scheduled meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) with a finished concept for the necessary composition of the TNF potential in Western Europe.

In this connection, the general confirmed that Soviet military planning was directed toward depriving NATO of the possibility of first use of nuclear weapons in the event of war. Rogers stated: "At a certain alarm status, NATO will disperse its nuclear warheads among its field units. More of them would escape destruction there than at the supply depots. We must nevertheless take one thing very seriously: One of the Soviets' first objectives would be to eliminate our nuclear potential, so as to prevent NATO from being able to resort to the first use of nuclear weapons."

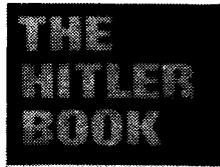
Western experts have pointed out in various studies that the Soviet Union would like to attain their objective of destroying NATO's TNF potential without deploying any nuclear weapons themselves. In their view, Moscow intends to accomplish this with solely conventional means. The reasoning behind this, in their judgment, is clear: The Soviet Union does not want the threat of nuclear attack on West European territory to endanger its own offensive forces and its hinterlands. This in turn will force the United States to immediately rely on the United States' strategic potential for the first use of nuclear weapons.

This would put the American President in the position of having to assume that the use of the United States' strategic weapons would receive a corresponding response from the Soviet Union, aimed at American targets. Western analysts' interpretation of Soviet thinking here is that Moscow wants to put the United States in this position because the East does not believe that the American President would then have the courage and decisiveness to launch strategic weapons against the Soviet Union.

According to the experts, there are very clear signs that the Soviet Union is concentrating on eliminating the West's TNF potential by conventional means. The Red Army is preparing for many contingencies, including the destruction of the potential with the aid of rapidly advancing ground troops, paratrooper landings at supply depots or at nuclear arsenals, and finally an effective type of attack whereby nuclear weapons are destroyed with the help of sabotage units.

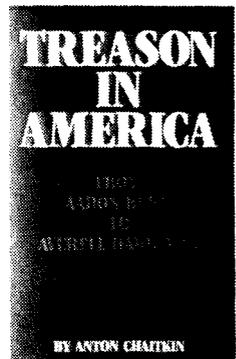
Recently NATO circles have been devoting great attention to the danger posed by such "special units." These covert combat troops would begin to operate behind NATO's front lines immediately before or simultaneously with the initiation of open hostilities. They are therefore occasioning a re-evaluation of the security of NATO's depots and of the nuclear weapons to be distributed among field units.

New from Franklin House



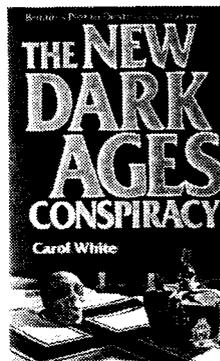
The Hitler Book

Schiller Institute
 Edited by Helga Zepp-LaRouche
\$9.95



Treason In America

From Aaron Burr to Averell Harriman
 by Anton Chaitkin
\$5.95



20,000 COPIES JUST REPRINTED

The New Dark Ages Conspiracy

Britain's Plot to Destroy Civilization
 by Carol White
\$4.95

Order from your bookstore or from:



The New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Company, Inc.

304 West 58th Street, 5th floor, New York, N.Y. 10019

Bulk Orders: 10-99 books 25% discount,
 100 or more books 40% discount
 Shipping \$1.50 for first book, \$.50 for each additional book
 Bulk orders pay UPS charges

Mastercard/Visa holders call: (212) 247-7484