
Warsaw Pact

Major maneuvers open on European continent

by Konstantin George

On Saturday, May 25, a six-day Warsaw Pact military maneuver involving Soviet and Czech units, totaling at least 25,000 troops, began in Western Czechoslovakia. The event, receiving scarcely a line of coverage in the Western press, marks the opening of a major series of Soviet ground and air maneuvers on the European continent, which will continue through September.

Military professionals are not nearly as sanguine as the Western press, regarding these developments. Pointing to the 1984 summer maneuvers in Central Europe and the Western Soviet Union, which rehearsed a surprise attack on West Germany, that would require no preparations, and hence, leave no warning time, a veteran military intelligence analyst told *EIR*: "The Soviet maneuvers of June-July 1984, and later in August-September 1984, massive as they were, were essentially rehearsing offensive unit operations at the Front Level [The Soviet term "Front" refers to an operational area involving several Armies]. We expect these maneuvers to be systematically expanded in scope during 1985 and 1986 . . . to encompass the Theater of War, or 'TVD' level."

The analyst continued: "The Soviets need to conduct maneuvers, which would de facto span the entire Western Front." After stressing that the Soviet buildup of offensive weapons systems, from missiles, to tanks, to munition stocks, is far beyond the published Western estimates issued by IISS and other institutes, he reported: "Two to three years are required to bring their forces to the point where they can invade the entire length of the Western Theater, without making any visible assault preparations."

He concluded in alarm: "I'm firmly convinced that in two to three years, the Soviets will be in a position to mount a surprise attack across Europe."

On the move in Bohemia

The exercises now underway in the Bohemia and Moravia regions (Western and Central Czechoslovakia, respectively), are clearly offensive operation rehearsals, even from the limited information issued by the Warsaw Pact on the maneuvers to date. The Czech News Agency, CTK, reported on May 24, that the aim of the exercises involving Soviet and Czech ground and air forces, was to "enhance ground-air coordination," i.e., air support of forward-moving army motorized and tank units.

The Soviet "Central Group of Forces in Czechoslovakia" number 80,000 ground troops, including six Divisions (three Armored and three Motorized) plus one SS-22 Brigade with 36 SS-22 Launchers. The SS-22, with a 1000 km range (625 miles), was first introduced into Czechoslovakia after the big "Shield-84" maneuvers of September 1984. According to well-placed sources, the current maneuvers will mark the first use of the SS-22s in the C.S.S.R. in a major military exercise.

While news is still sparse, sources have confirmed that Soviet units participating include "Central Group" HQ units based at Mlada Boleslav, northeast of Prague, and units of the 18th Motorized Division, also based there. It has also been confirmed that units of the Czech 20th Motorized Division, based at Karlovy Vary, near the Bavarian frontier, are also participating.

The current exercises are the biggest since the "Shield-84" maneuvers of August and September 1984, which involved over 60,000 troops. Besides Soviet and Czech units, units of the East German Polish Armies, and token Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Rumanian units participated. In contrast to the present exercises, which began after no visible preparations, "Shield-84" featured extensive preparation time, with the Warsaw Pact contingents arriving over the latter half of August, and the active part of the exercises first beginning on Sept. 9. Shield-84's active maneuvers climaxed simultaneously on Sept. 11 and 12 in three geographical regions: in Slovakia, or Eastern Czechoslovakia; in the central region of Moravia; and, in Bohemia. Highlights of the Bohemian portion of the maneuvers included a multi-national Warsaw Pact unit crossing of the Elbe with pontoon bridges, and, the dropping by parachute of a Soviet Airborne Division, with its airborne armored vehicles, from the U.S.S.R. into Bohemia.

New ICBMs by the hundreds

The picture of a surging growth of Soviet offensive military capability, timed to achieve maximum strategic superiority over the United States and NATO by about 1988, is confirmed in the cold facts and figures available in May from the *White Book* of the West German Defense Ministry. The Ministry declares: "The Soviet Union is now in the midst of considerably expanding the number of its ICBMs, which are so accurate, that they could hit or destroy even protected missile silos."

The Ministry reports that the Soviets are now in the midst of: 1) Replacing their 520 one-warhead SS-11s, stationed between 1966 and 1973, with the mobile precision accurate ICBM, the SS-25. 2) Beginning in 1986, the 150 SS-17s, a MIRVed missile with four warheads, which was first stationed in 1977, will be replaced by the precision accurate SS-24 mobile ICBM. Each SS-24 has 10 warheads. Thus, in addition to the accuracy question, the SS-24 stationing represents a net gain of 900 nuclear warheads.