

Massive new Soviet military maneuvers accompanied by command changes

by Konstantin George

The Soviet Union's summer military maneuvers, through which the Russians are "fine tuning" their war preparations, are now in full swing. Since the last week of May, there has been an uninterrupted series of land, sea, and air exercises—announced and unannounced—in Europe, the North Atlantic, and the Baltic. The most recent exercise activity has focused heavily on perfecting the plan of attack on two crucial NATO regions—West Germany and the Northern Flank.

Accompanying the summer maneuvers is a round of high-level command changes in the Soviet military leadership, to accelerate the process of change-over to wartime command and control.

The first of these changes was made public on July 13, at 1700 hours, when the East German News Agency, ADN, released a wire and photo of a farewell reception held that day in East Berlin by East German leader Erich Honecker, Defense Minister Heinz Hoffmann, and Honecker's young, groomed successor on the Politburo, Egon Krenz. They were honoring the departure of Soviet General of the Army Mikhail Zaitsev, since December 1980 the Commander in Chief of the GSFG (Group of Soviet Forces in Germany)—the European Theater spearhead offensive troops—and the Chief political officer of the GSFG since 1982, Colonel General Lisichev.

While Soviet media have kept totally silent, the ADN wire and large photo appeared on the front page of the East German party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, on July 15.

Honecker wished them "much success in your new, responsibility-filled activities," a clear signal that Zaitsev and Lisichev were on their way to top-level positions in the Soviet military leadership.

Lisichev's new "responsibility-filled activities" have already been related to Western news agencies by spokesmen from the Soviet defense ministry. Lisichev has been appointed the Soviet Union's top political officer—the Chief of the Main Political Directorate—replacing the 77-year-old Gen. Alexei Yepishev, a one-time deputy minister of security under Lavrenti Beria, who has headed the MPD since April 1962.

While nothing has yet been made known concerning Zaitsev's new duties, he would probably be made wartime commander of Western Theater forces, the 1st and 2nd Echelon

forces based in Eastern Europe and the western U.S.S.R., who would be used to invade and overrun Western Europe. The Soviets' overall wartime commander, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, who has been on location in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Byelorussia, actively supervising the troops of the Western Theater since last September, will have terminated his "inspection at the front" period, and move to Moscow, to spend more time on his duties as supreme wartime military commander.

Latest reports, based on "leaks" from the Kremlin, assert that Marshal Vladimir Tolubko, Commander in Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces since April 1972, and Marshal Viktor Kulikov, Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces, have retired. If the report on Tolubko is true, a military command decision has been made that a 70-year-old must make way for someone younger, to give continuity to this crucial post for the rest of the decade.

Since January 1977, when he was replaced by Marshal Ogarkov as Chief of the General Staff, Kulikov has played a largely ceremonial role as head of the Warsaw Pact—a post which until now, if not in the future, has meant being "kicked upstairs."

The same reports, unconfirmed, say that Ogarkov has been made a First Deputy Defense Minister, and is working out of Moscow. If the reports that Ogarkov is also being made Warsaw Pact Commander in Chief are true, then this would signify a totally new definition of a post which has hitherto been window dressing. It would mean that the Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact would have overall wartime command responsibilities.

No replacement for Zaitsev as Commander in Chief of the GSFG has yet been named. However, it is clear that preparations for the command changes were certified in April at the time of the Soviet Central Committee Plenum. In April, a new First Deputy Commander in Chief for the GSFG arrived, Lt. General Nikolai Vasilyevich Kalinin. Kalinin's previous post was First Deputy Commander of the Carpathian Military District. Kalinin, a veteran of years of service in the Far East Military District through 1983, served there with distinction under the commander at the time, General of the Army Ivan Tretyak.

In the summer of 1984, Tretyak was given one of the

major wartime command responsibilities, Commander in Chief of the Far East High Command. The first head of the recreated Far East High Command, from 1979 to December 1980, was General (now Marshal) Vasilii Petrov, who then became commander in chief of the ground forces, and now is a First deputy defense minister.

The military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda's* July 14 summation of Soviet-East German maneuvers July 6-14, was a tacit admission that Kalinin is at least Acting Commander in Chief of the GSFG. In the customary location where Zaitsev and Lisichev would have been mentioned, Kalinin, and one Lt.-Gen. G. Donskoi, the leading political officer of the GSFG, are cited.

Armored breakthrough into West Germany

From July 6 to July 14, large-scale combined Soviet-East German ground and air exercises were held in East Germany. The maneuvers, called "Soyuz-85," involved at least 50,000 troops, including motorized rifle, tank, artillery, airborne, and missile units.

Dropping the standard litany about Warsaw Pact "defenders" launching "counterattacks" against the NATO "aggressor," the Soviet Union this time openly described the maneuvers as an offensive, which, in Central Europe, means one thing—an invasion of West Germany.

Krasnaya Svezda appeared, both on July 12 and July 13, with front page articles describing the offensive nature of the maneuver. On July 12, Colonels Lishnii and Panyukov, writing in *Krasnaya Svezda*, asserted that the task was "to break through the enemy's defenses" in the path of the main axis of advance:

"Artillery thunder broke through the morning calm. Suddenly an avalanche of tanks, infantry combat vehicles, and armored personnel carriers went into action in the decisive direction. The 'enemy,' under cover behind minefields and artificial obstacles, plastered the attackers with fire from weapons which had survived the artillery and missile barrage."

NATO air attacks against the Soviet Blitzkrieg forces are beaten off:

"The 'enemy' throws airplanes and helicopters into the battle. . . . Their aviation is met by well-directed fire from the anti-air defense units (SAMs) which are in the combat ranks of the attackers. The air strikes [by the 'enemy'] don't reach their targets." Then, finally, the last NATO counterattacks are repulsed.

The exercise featured large unit crossings of the Elbe River under simulated combat conditions. This type of exercise is repeated often by the Soviet troops earmarked for deep-penetration offensives through West Germany.

Action on the northern flank

The same pattern of large-scale military exercises and blatant provocations seen in Central Europe (see *Report from Bonn*, page 51) has been occurring in the Barents Sea, Norwegian Sea, and Eastern Atlantic.

At 1:00 a.m. on July 11 (given the time of year and the location—way above the Arctic Circle—it was broad daylight), two Soviet Krivak Class Missile Frigates moved 50 kilometers inside Norway's 200-mile zone in the Barents Sea, on a line NNW of Kirkenes, the Norwegian town bordering on the Soviet Union. One of the frigates, using mine-sweeping equipment, cut and hauled aboard an underwater cable with a sonar attachment, which belonged to a Norwegian civilian oil exploration vessel. The cable and sonar were monitoring the effects of detonations from depth charges launched from the Norwegian ship.

Norwegian defense sources told *EIR* that the Russians "panicked" and sent their frigates deep into Norwegian waters because the underwater explosions were destroying Soviet anti-submarine warfare sensors, placed on the floor of the Barents Sea, including in Norwegian waters. There are a series of such sensor lines. They function as early warning against U.S. nuclear attack submarines, which could threaten the concentration of Soviet ballistic missile submarines that operate in the Barents Sea, as a key component of the Soviet thermonuclear-barrage forces.

According to the Norwegian defense ministry, during the same time-frame in mid-July, large-scale Soviet naval exercises have been under way in the Norwegian Sea.

The Eastern Atlantic

The Soviet warships on maneuvers in the Norwegian Sea have since moved southwest, and are now conducting a 25-ship exercise in the Eastern Atlantic to the West of Ireland. On July 12, a Soviet Task Force left the Mediterranean, including a Krivak class guided missile frigate and a Kashin class destroyer, to join the exercises in the North Atlantic.

Then, an "exceptionally large"—to quote the Danish Navy—number of Soviet warships left the Baltic Sea, and are now on maneuvers in the Kattegat, south of Kristiansand, Norway. According to Danish intelligence sources, a total of 21 Soviet warships and supply ships have left the Baltic, in groups. These forces include the Kynda class cruiser "Grozny," armed with nuclear missiles; 2 Krivak class guided-missile frigates; 6 submarines (4 Whisky class, 1 Foxtrot class, 1 Juliet class); 4 amphibious landing ships (1 Alligator class and 3 Ropucha class LSTs); plus a number of supply ships.

Danish aerial surveillance pictures confirm that the LSTs contain Soviet Marines on board. While such Soviet exercises are commonplace in the Baltic, they are seldom seen in the waters of the North Sea and the Kattegat.

A total of 50 Soviet warships and supply ships are currently on unannounced maneuvers in the Eastern Atlantic. From the last week of June, when over 24 Soviet submarines off the U.S. coast simulated a thermonuclear "pin down" and strategic decapitation barrage, there has been an unprecedented string of continuing Soviet naval exercises and related ship movements under way for nearly four weeks, in various quarters of the North Atlantic.