

Media silence hides big Soviet maneuvers

by Konstantin George

In the two weeks beginning about June 12, Soviet and Warsaw Pact naval forces conducted at least three nominally separate, but interconnected maneuvers in the Baltic Sea and the Norwegian Sea. The maneuvers are significant both in their own right, and as reflecting the policy of a "New Yalta" strategic accommodation with Soviet Union being pursued by the majority Liberal Establishment of the West on both sides of the Atlantic, since there was not one word of coverage in any news media of West Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Our reportage on the Soviet-Warsaw Pact naval maneuvers is based on *EIR's* discussions with officials of the West German and Norwegian defense ministries.

According to officers of the West German Navy in the Bonn Defense Ministry, the weekend of June 14-15 saw the climax of one of the largest combined naval, air force, and amphibious landing exercises ever staged by the Russians, Poles, and East Germans in the Baltic, when "more than 30 landing ships" including the 13,500-ton *Ivan Rogov*—capable of transporting an entire marine infantry battalion with all of its equipment, tanks, armored vehicles and supplies—landed at least one entire Soviet and one entire Polish Marine Infantry Brigade on the Pommeranian coast of Poland, near the town of Stolpmuende. The convoy of landing ships was escorted by numerous warships drawn from the Soviet Baltic Fleet, joined by units from the Soviet Northern Fleet (headquartered at Murmansk on the Kola Peninsula), which some days earlier had entered the Baltic, and warships from the Polish and East German navies. Numerous Soviet fighter-bombers, from bases in Poland and the Baltic Military District of the Soviet Union also participated.

On June 23, a colonel at the Norwegian Defense Ministry in Oslo told *EIR* that since the end of the previous week (i.e., around June 13, and hence parallel to the big Baltic maneuvers), a large-scale Soviet naval exercise had been underway in the Norwegian Sea, northwest of the northern port of Tromso, and northwest of northern Norway's Lofoten Islands. The exercise involved numerous Soviet warships from the Northern Fleet from Murmansk, joined by a task force of nine Soviet warships which had reached the Norwegian Sea from the Mediterranean. This task force included a Kresta I Class ASW cruiser, a modern Udaloy Class ASW destroyer, two older Kashin-mod Class destroyers, and a Krivak II Class

modern ASW frigate.

We asked: "What are Soviet warships from the Mediterranean, which normally means they stem from the Black Sea Fleet, doing in the Norwegian Sea?" The Norwegian Defense Ministry replied: "No, these nine ships are part of the Northern Fleet. They were sent down to the Mediterranean for a few months as reinforcements (i.e., during the April Libyan Crisis, another transparent fact of Soviet military moves never reported in the Western press), and were returning to their home base on the Kola (Peninsula), and linked up with other units from the Northern Fleet to stage these exercises off our northern coast."

During the Libyan Crisis of mid-April, as *EIR* reported, the Soviet Northern Fleet, including a carrier task force and landing ships, staged large-scale maneuvers off the coast of Finnmark in the far north of Norway. The maneuvers climaxed with the landing of over a brigade of Soviet naval infantry a mere eight miles from the Soviet-Norwegian border.

On June 26, the Norwegian defense ministry told *EIR* that on June 19, "a Warsaw Pact task force of five warships left the Baltic, passing through the Danish Straits . . . the Skaggerak . . . and are now conducting apparently separate maneuvers in the Norwegian Sea. They are not operating together with the other group, but we think the exercises are interconnected." The task force was composed of two Soviet warships (a Kashin-mod Class destroyer and a Krivak I Class ASW frigate), an East German Kony Class frigate, and two Polish warships.

Subsequent discussions with officials at the West German Defense Ministry in Bonn led to a confirmation of all the facts on the two Norwegian Sea exercises submitted by the Norwegian Defense Ministry.

The theme of gaping holes in NATO's ability to counter Soviet naval moves in the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic was presented in Bonn on June 24 by British Vice-Admiral Dalton, the deputy commander in chief of NATO's SACLANT. Admiral Dalton declared that NATO "above all" lacked sufficient destroyers and frigates in the North Atlantic, that NATO's alleged naval "technological superiority" was now only "paper thin," following vast "qualitative improvements" in the Soviet Navy. Dalton also demanded that the Alliance urgently change its present crisis mobilization and reinforcement procedures, so that troop and equipment convoys from the United States actually arrive in Europe *before* war starts.

The admiral is demanding action from governments which look the other way when it comes to the Soviet threat. Soviet military moves are not even reported, by government or press, let alone taken as cause for alarm. The absence of coverage stems from a blackout policy by the media. That is clear from discussions with the military editors of leading newspapers in West Germany. They knew the facts we are reporting here. But the lid was on.