

‘Soviet Military Power 1988’: Frank Carlucci’s little fraud

by Leo F. Scanlon

A 161-page analysis of Soviet military capabilities which does not contain the word “spetsnaz” in its index could be considered a suspicious type of fraud. If that same document is released to the public by the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America, one’s assessment must be very measured, and very grim.

Soviet Military Power: An Assessment of the Threat (SMP), is this year’s revised title of the annual report which had become the hallmark of the Weinberger administration of the Department of Defense. Produced under the direction of Secretary Frank Carlucci, the latest edition is described by its authors as “an administration document, issued by the Department of Defense” and sports a new title, and a changed style.

It is not a change for the better.

The original editions of this document were produced and designed to present a maximum amount of unclassified information about the Soviet military, in a format accessible to the citizens, friends, and allies of the United States. The straightforward nature of the publication made it a valuable document to military analysts, educators, and writers all over the world.

The latest edition still contains an enormous amount of material otherwise not accessible in popular form, but it is a “consensus document” and is no more than an argument for the insipid compromises which define the current defense budget proposal, and the administration’s negotiating posture toward the Soviet Union. In those areas where the picture of Soviet might presents a compelling argument for current policy—such as the post-INF strategy of pressing the European allies to modernize and expand their conventional defense capabilities—the picture is drawn starkly. On matters which are politically sensitive—such as the Soviet deployment and use, in combat against American forces, of weapons based on advanced physical principles—there is little or no useful information.

The fundamental difference between the outlook presented in this issue of *SMP*, and previous editions, can be seen in the introduction. The 1987 edition states in its very first paragraph, “The major task assigned to the Soviet military . . . is to achieve a force posture for the Soviet Union that provides for absolute security as it continues to seek world domination” (page 7). Now that the INF treaty has been signed, we find this definition of Soviet national security priorities: “To strengthen the Soviet political system . . . to extend and enhance Soviet influence worldwide. To defend the Soviet homeland and state against potential aggression. To maintain dominance over the land and sea areas adjacent to Soviet borders.” In the summary of the 1988 edition, the assertion is made, “We believe that the strategic balance today is essentially stable”—a utopian assessment which is controverted by the material which is otherwise presented in the preceding pages!

Some graduate of Gorbachov-endorsed programs to eliminate the “enemy image” was apparently put in charge of the new book’s graphic design: The charts that used to show Soviet forces in bright red and the West’s in blue, are now done in soothing earth-tones of maroon and green!

War plans versus net assessments

A change in outlook as dramatic as that illustrated above may be attributed to an effort to propitiate a real or imagined Russian ukase, but there is a method behind these statements which is more powerful than simple fear—it is the system of thinking which bureaucrats call “balance assessment.” Like its cousin, the geopolitical “balance of power” analysis, the “balance assessment” presents itself as a conclusion drawn from facts unprejudiced by the truth. It is characterized by *Pravda*-like equivocal formulations of the type: “on the one hand . . . then, on the other hand . . .” and is the preferred means of expression in any bureaucracy.

A clever bureaucrat can structure such a document to

produce a useful conclusion in spite of the vehicle—and there are a few of these to be found in the *SMP* assessment. For example, we find remarks at the beginning which situate the current strategy of the Russian *Nomenklatura* as a direct continuation of czarist imperial policies, policies shaped by a society which “has not assimilated such basic Western concepts as constitutionalism, democratic government, the rights of the individual . . .” and so on.

This useful observation is then obviated by the assertion, “The Soviet Union and the Czarist system that preceded it have justified their expansionist policies over the past three centuries by asserting—often falsely—that Russian history is a repetitive story of invasion and occupation” (page 8)—a piece of “glasnost” palaver worthy of Comrade Gorbachov’s campaign to “fill in the blank pages of history.”

The process of war planning, done by a trained general staff, and explained to an educated public, is the *sine qua non* of a republican military system, such as that on which our nation is based. In its simplest approximation, the principle of this system is summed up by the statement on page 159 of *SMP*, “We must ensure that we have the means to meet the Soviet threat as manifested by their actions and their capabilities, not their words.”

There may yet exist war plans based on such a principle, the specifics of which are necessarily classified. Unfortunately, the public’s perception of U.S. military policy is shaped by the rigged debate over “military spending.” In previous years, the defense budget was at least broadly motivated on the basis of the present threat, and *SMP* helped explain why the DoD’s proposals were reasonable and necessary. The current budget begins with the need to impose fiscal austerity, and secondarily proposes to represent “an acceptable level of risk” in its defense posture. Thus, the purpose of this edition of *SMP* is to present the risks which are acceptable—not “the face of the enemy.”

Actual Soviet aims: global showdown

The most glaring deficiency of the *SMP* assessment has been cited—the word *spetsnaz* (special forces) and its cognates, are absent from the book entirely. On that basis alone, this exercise is a fraud. The discussion of the critical role these units are playing in current Soviet operations can be found on page 89 of last year’s edition. It is immediately followed by a dramatic picture of the proven operational capabilities of the chemical warfare troops of the Soviet army, the combination being an effective picture of the brutal threat posed to the populations of Europe by the Red Army.

In this year’s edition, the discussion of Soviet chemical warfare capabilities is to be found on page 78, and advises, “In a war with NATO, the Soviet Defense Council decision to employ chemical weapons would be weighed against the consequences of U.S. retaliation. If the Soviets calculate that they could achieve significant benefits at what they considered an acceptable risk, they *might* employ chemical weap-

ons. If such a decision were made, the Supreme High Command would execute the decision and integrate” and so on (emphasis added).

This formulation is typical of the gratuitous assumptions which abound in this edition of *SMP*. It is inserted to deflect the reader from the facts of this matter, which were presented clearly in previous editions, and are scattered but present even in this one. Those facts are that the Soviets have upgraded the capabilities and training of their chemical warfare troops—including the only live training ever conducted, at Chernobyl. Simultaneously, they have restructured these units into smaller, mobile strike forces. “At the front level, the chemical defense brigade has been augmented by a variety of independent battalions. Units at all levels are being fully equipped and continue receiving new and more modern equipment” (page 78).

This is a pattern characteristic of the reorganization of the Soviet forces conducted under the direction of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov and his colleagues in the above-mentioned Supreme High Command, or *Stavka*. (Unfortunately, the pictures of these notables which graced former editions of *SMP* have also disappeared from this issue; in the bureaucracy, one doesn’t wish war to get too personal.) This reorganization has the aim of eliminating cumbersome logistics and administration functions from the combat line troops, and maximizing the speed and flexibility of the assault forces, which are assumed to be operating in an environment of full spectrum combat (page 74ff.).

These small, mobile forces are organized to be able to carry out a war plan which has been previously assimilated by the unit commanders. Modern combat being what it is, the Soviets are not foolish enough to think that there will be reliable communications throughout the chain of command. Whatever capability exists—chemical, electromagnetic, or nuclear—*will* be used. *SMP*’s formulation, “might be used,” in this context is not an equivocation, it is a lie.

In a discussion of the related issue of mobilization of manpower (page 90), the authors point out that in this area as well, the Soviets are making aggressive improvements in their capabilities. After admitting that NATO forces rely heavily on support units drawn from reserves which have a small chance of arriving at mobilization centers, it pointed out that the Soviets can “gradually, sequentially, and covertly raise the readiness of selected elements of the armed forces. The Soviets thus can maintain a large degree of secrecy while preparing their forces for war.”

This brings us face to face with the criminal nature of the decision to avoid discussion of the *spetsnaz* capability. The authors are under orders to downplay the realities which quantify or make corporeal the intentions of the Soviet state. The ongoing military actions of *spetsnaz* units in Western Europe and elsewhere are well known and documented. Why then, do they remain unacknowledged? Why no mention even of their role in the Soviet order of battle?

EIR has produced several authoritative studies which prove that the Soviets are engaged in the early phases of fielding a new generation of weapons based on the control of coherent electromagnetic pulses. These include, but are not limited to, lasers and radio frequency weapons, and have been referenced in previous editions of *SMP*.

The reference to these weapons in *SMP*, 88 is limited to a description of defensive applications, *in spite of the fact that a Soviet ship-mounted laser, pictured in last year's edition, was subsequently used to blind the pilot of a U.S. surveillance plane which was monitoring a series of Soviet missile tests which included flights targeting the Hawaiian islands!* Is this a case of *maskirovka*? In a very real sense, the answer is, yes. This edition of *SMP* is edited with an eye to protecting the mythology surrounding the signing of the INF treaty. The weapons systems described in the *EIR* reports are designed to make certain categories of nuclear weapons archaic, and render them suitable for use in public relations bargaining sessions. (Even in Washington, very few are credulous enough to believe that the Soviets will actually destroy any significant number of SS-20s.) If the INF treaty is a hoax, the current defense budget is an irresponsible fraud—a charge which has been leveled publicly by several DoD officials. That fact cannot be recognized by the DoD, however, since the budget proposal is locked in by prior agreement with the Congress. Thus, by extension, *SMP* cannot discuss any aspect of military reality which contradicts current policy.

Conventional modernization

The one apparent exception to this rule is the sections of the publication which describe the current status of Soviet conventional forces. The authors are shameless enough to prove the INF treaty a joke, when they point out, "The Soviets began modernizing other missile systems, such as replacing the SCUD with the SS-23. . . . Compared to NATO's 88 operationally deployed LANCE missile launchers, the Warsaw Pact deploys about 1,400 FROG, SCUD, and SS-21 missile launchers. . . . These missiles are not constrained by the INF treaty. The refires for these launchers are estimated to have been increased by between 50 and 100 percent over the past several years. Consequently, the Pact has been able to plan on using these missiles armed with non-nuclear warheads, to strike NATO air defenses, airfields, and command-and-control nodes without sacrificing their ability to plan on using the same missiles, if needed, in theater nuclear strikes."

Notice that there are few equivocating qualifiers in this assessment. The same is true of the extended treatment given to the ongoing process of modernizing all basic Soviet weapons systems, from tanks to attack fighters, with electronic weaponry equivalent to the latest fielded in the West. This transformation of a quantitatively superior but qualitatively inferior force, into an overwhelmingly superior force is proceeding at a rapid pace.

Further, it is documented that this is occurring because of a long-term investment strategy in both basic industrial capability and advanced R&D in the Soviet economy. The benefits of this policy are paying off for the military in spite of the otherwise well-known limitations of the Soviet economy. The most immediate effect is to help contribute to increases in mobilization capability and sustainability.

The document goes so far as to admit, "Under some scenarios, the Pact would have an advantage in sustaining combat operations since NATO may not have time to activate and put in place an adequate support infrastructure." Not surprisingly, *SMP* does not come to the same conclusion as former NATO commander Gen. Bernard Rogers, who pointed to this reality, and denounced the INF treaty for the sellout it is.

The reason that straight talk is tolerated in this limited area, is that the policy of the leading circles in the West is to use the discussion of the need to modernize conventional forces—an undeniable necessity—to impose austerity on the European economies. This strategy has been outlined in numerous documents produced by leading think tanks here and in Europe. This edition of *SMP* stays well within the bounds of that controlled debate.

The regional assessment fraud

If one can analyze the Soviet military without mentioning spetsnaz, one can surely present an assessment of the "balance" in Europe and other major theaters without mentioning low-intensity warfare. *SMP* does just that.

This is a particularly ironic gesture, since one of the most significant developments in the U.S. military bureaucracy this year was the formation of an entire command dedicated to coordinating military activities in areas of low-intensity conflict. Thus, we have a new command which apparently has no threat facing it!

The simple explanation for this runs along these lines: "These matters cannot be discussed in a forum like this, since most of what we are dealing with is Soviet proxy actions, and the proof of Soviet origins would require disclosure of classified methods and sources—besides, in most cases, the Soviets are only exploiting problems we create, and no one is going to touch that." There is much truth in this statement, but there is still more to it.

The Soviets are not "planning war"—they are refining elements of an evolving war plan, and by their own statements, and the assessment of previous editions of *SMP*, consider themselves to be in a condition of "low-intensity warfare" with the Western Alliance. The Soviets are openly funding the rioters in West Berlin, and the organizations which support the bombings aimed at NATO troops and their dependents in Europe—these are facts, deliberately excluded from a supposedly authoritative publication of the DoD.

We must agree with the officer who said, "This is just another administration document."