

A year of non-stop military exercises

by Konstantin George

Soviet and Warsaw Pact military exercises in 1984 rehearsed a surprise attack on NATO and a full-fledged naval deployment to sea for general war—the highpoints in an uninterrupted schedule of combat practice lasting from last winter to this one. In these unceasing “exercises” and in the introduction of new weapons systems in every category, we have observed the feverish activities of an empire embarked on a drive for world domination.

The Soviet strategic arms build-up of the past year is unprecedented in history. It started with the Soviets’ crash laser anti-ballistic missile (ABM) program, aptly described in a recent Pentagon intelligence assessment as a drive for “superiority in space-based weapons.” Parallel to this crash program was the Soviets’ drive to construct a back-up “off the shelf” ABM system of defensive missiles, which, although technologically obsolete, can be installed in accordance with Moscow’s near-term timetable of risking war by shooting down a significant percentage of U.S. missiles, thus making Russian war losses “acceptable.” The latter program includes the dual-purpose anti-missile and anti-aircraft SA-10 and SA-12 missile systems and the old “Galosh” ABM system of the early 1970s. An ABM radar system network is under construction, in crass violation of the ABM Treaty.

In contrast to the U.S.A.’s endangered MX ICBM missile program, the Soviet Union’s new generation SS-25 ICBM, a fully mobile missile, is in mass production. As many as fifty SS-25s are already operational, installed in the convertible launchers of the intermediate-range SS-20; 400-500 of them are to be operational within a year. The newly tested SS-24 ICBM, which can be either fixed or mobile, is probably now in serial production. At least 27 nuclear attack subs are being refitted with 3,000 km range cruise missiles, complementing new inventories of ground- and air-launched cruise missiles. Intercontinental-range cruise missiles are also under development.

The Soviet stationing of SS-20 IRBMs in the western part of the U.S.S.R. this year—pointing West—raised the war tempo to the highest pitch ever. Over 400 SS-20 launchers (each with 1 firing and 2 or 3 reload missiles) are already in

place, toward an estimated total of 500 to be operational in 1985.

New weapons of terror are under development and some old ones slated for revival. Should the United States develop an ABM system, threatened *Izvestia* commentator Valentin Falin on Dec. 12, the Soviet leadership would build offensive systems of the following types: 1) Fractional Orbit Bombardment Systems (FOBS), orbiting nuclear warheads, planned in the 1960s, which on signal, drop to their targets within minutes, 2) super-heavy missiles which are safe against weaker chemical lasers, and 3) devices that could paralyze all communications systems.

War rehearsals of the Russian empire

On July 4 and 5 of 1984, 11 of the 12 Soviet army divisions in East Germany, stationed closest to the West German border, left their barracks and went into “pre-attack jump-off positions,” the terrifying, too-realistic climax to the largest military maneuvers ever staged by the Russian armed forces since the end of World War II. This rehearsal of a surprise attack on West Germany came in the context of maneuvers involving solely Russian troops, held from June 28 to July 5 in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary *de facto*, the western U.S.S.R. military districts, the Baltic and Leningrad military districts, and the Baltic fleet.

These dramatic events, which sent alarm bells ringing in the NATO military command, followed the greatest armored and helicopter-borne unit and fighter-bomber reinforcement of Soviet forces in East Germany and Eastern Europe since the war. This occurred in parallel with the mass stationing of new-generation precision short- and medium-range SS-21, SS-22, SS-23 missiles with Soviet forces in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, as well as in the Baltic and Leningrad Military Districts facing Scandinavia, and with a major command reorganization of the Soviet forces in East Germany, where now the Soviet armies there are commanded by a “new breed” of “Guderian”-type generals selected for their total commitment to a *blitzkrieg* surprise attack.

Both before and after the July attack practice, there was a sequence of almost-constant maneuvers throughout Eastern Europe. Following announced rehearsals of winter war fighting by Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian troops in western Czechoslovakia from Feb. 6-12, there also came reports of secret maneuvers during February of 60,000 Soviet and East German troops inside East Germany. In March, the Soyuz-84 staff exercises of Warsaw Pact forces in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, southwest U.S.S.R., and the Black Sea followed close on the heels of Druzhba-84 maneuvers of Soviet, East German, and Polish forces on Polish territory. Yug-84, another exercise in East Germany, which took place during March and April, and Summer-84, the Warsaw Pact staff exercises in Poland during May that focused on field

communications kept the Soviet level of mobilization at a high level leading up to their June-July show of force.

During this same period, Soviet fighter planes repeatedly flew interference against civilian planes in the air corridors to West Berlin, threatening at any moment to touch off a full-fledged Berlin crisis. They also kept NATO air defense in a state of alert by flying straight at the West German border at high speeds, peeling off only within seconds of a violation.

The Soviets exercised their nuclear forces in East Germany in late July, and this was followed by the gigantic Shield-84 Warsaw Pact maneuvers of September. The forces for attack on the nations of Europe had remained in place throughout the year.

Advances on the flanks

The predicament of Europe is even more dramatically portrayed by a listing of Soviet advances and threats along the weak and crumbling northern and southern flanks of the Western Alliance.

Reviewing northern Europe, we find a grim situation:

- The Norwegian territory of Spitzbergen in the Arctic Ocean can be occupied within minutes by the Soviets using, at least in part, the thousands of Russian "civilians" residing there legally through a 1920s treaty.

- The northernmost mainland part of Norway, Finnmark, is a prime target for a Soviet "surgical strike," which would give the Soviets direct access to the North Atlantic.

- Finland is almost part of the Warsaw Pact, having all the ingredients but an actual Russian troop presence.

- Sweden has been subjected throughout 1984 to Soviet air incursions (including a near miss of a new "KAL" tragedy in which Soviet fighters in August pursued a passenger plane into Swedish air space). In spite of Soviet operations, however, Sweden remains locked in the hands of Soviet asset Olof Palme.

- Denmark, bordering West Germany, is a prime candidate for a Soviet surgical strike and through the machinations of the Social Democracy is veering ever closer to the supposedly "neutralist" position of Palme's Sweden.

If the northern flank looks grim, the southern flank, the Mediterranean littoral, is catastrophic.

- Greece, a nominal member of NATO, is actively working with Moscow. Greece's renegade prime minister, Andreas Papandreu, has just formed an axis with Soviet client states Libya and Syria, shifting the Mediterranean balance toward Moscow.

- The strategic Mediterranean island state of Malta is being brought into the Soviet sphere as the "Grenada" of the Mediterranean.

- In the Balkans, International Monetary Fund victim Yugoslavia faces economic and social disintegration, with the possibility of being fragmented along ethnic-regional lines, a process under close and interested observation by Russia,

Russia's Balkan puppet Bulgaria, and the Stalinist psychotics of Albania.

Along with these political developments came a Soviet show of its forces in the Mediterranean. In January, the missile-carrying Kirov cruiser led the highest-power naval group ever deployed by the Soviets into the Mediterranean.

In the Far East, the Soviet Union has vastly built up all branches of its military service, its strategic bomber and SS-20 missile capability, and troop concentrations on Sakhalin Island and the Kuriles. Throughout the year, the Soviets have harassed Japan with airspace violations. And Soviet surrogate North Korea has just undergone the largest increase of its armored troop capability since the Korean war. North Korea now has three new armored corps in western Korea opposite Seoul, the invasion corridor of the 1950s.

In Afghanistan, where the Soviets are waging a war of extermination against the population, Russian troop strength has risen to 220,000, nearly doubling in 1984. There are now 130,000 Soviet mobile combat troops there and 90,000 troops guarding fixed points. Soviet air raids and artillery bombardments of Pakistani territory and villages are also nearly a daily occurrence. Most alarming, however, is the construction of air bases in the extreme southwest of Afghanistan, the part closest to the oil region of the Persian Gulf.

The Soviets have built up and tested their forces in each region in turn. The Soviet command, however, has also conducted exercises encompassing many regions at the same time. In late March, the Soviet command carried out what will probably in retrospect be called "Okean-84," the largest-ever exercises of the Soviet navy, conducted simultaneously in all the oceans of the world. On March 26, most of the Soviet Union's nearly 1,000 ship-strong navy was deployed out of home port in combat formations around the globe. These deployments were defined as "exercises," but the overall deployment, including the surge of submarines and combat ships into the North Atlantic from the Baltic, the North Sea, and from Murmansk through the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap, was unquestionably a simulation of general war. Senior NATO officials said they were "stunned" by the size, extent, rapidity, and surprise of the Soviet deployment. It tested a new global command-control communications system; it saturated the early-warning submarine detection means of NATO in the North Atlantic; it tested sophisticated anti-submarine warfare capabilities; and it put most, if not all, the Soviet nuclear-missile submarines out of port, at battle stations that were nearer than ever before to their ultimate targets in the continental United States.

In short, all predictions which had earlier claimed that such Soviet buildups were impossible in all geographical areas and the strategic realm combined were proven false. If such wrong assessments persist in being dominant in Western policy-making circles, the West may not have the luxury one year from now of looking back to see what went wrong.