
Eyewitness Report

A closer look at the 1986 autumn exercises of NATO

by Dean Andromidas and Michael Liebig

The NATO autumn 1986 maneuvers have demonstrated not only once again, but more than ever, how fundamentally important the military efficiency of the Western alliance is in preventing a war. Our first-hand observation of the ongoing NATO series of exercises gave us a precise idea what it would be like if the alliance's military capabilities were no longer around. More immediately than through any abstract comparison on paper of the East-West balance of forces, direct observation shows in stark terms what a deadly gap would be ripped open, what a vacuum would emerge opposite the totalitarian military superpower, should the NATO troop and equipment presence be reduced.

Unfortunately, the possibility that in Europe such a military "hole" will be torn open is closer to reality than at any time before in NATO's existence. In the United States, deep cuts in the government budget are on the agenda. Influential power-brokers among the East Coast Establishment are resolved to slash the defense budget, primarily through reducing the American troop presence in Europe. A propaganda campaign in this direction has been running in the American media, while in Congress, the proponents of a U.S. troop pullout have been gaining ground.

This is mirrored in the West European Social Democracies by a campaign that no longer merely calls for withdrawing American nuclear weapons from Europe, but demands the end to the entire American military presence. The Social Democracies call for transforming NATO's military potential into a so-called "defensive defense," stripped of any effective combat capability, and degrading the NATO armies to nothing more than expanded police formations.

Also among the conservative-liberal forces, such as the present ruling coalition of the Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democratic Party in West Germany, the "Moscow Faction" is growing—those calling for or inclined toward decoupling from the United States and making a strategic arrangement with Russia.

All this must be taken into account, as we consider now more closely this year's NATO autumn maneuvers.

The impression gained by the outside observer of the military efficiency of the troops participating in the autumn

maneuvers is good, even taking into account that this impression is limited to what occurred on the surface during the maneuvers.

Of course, errors and deficiencies in military efficiency and alliance strategy. NATO military doctrine lacks the resolve to fight to victory against any Soviet aggression. Valuable time would elapse before the United States and Western Europe could bring into operation an effective anti-missile defense. Europe lacks the nuclear weapons, namely the neutron weapons, which could most effectively knock out the "armored fist" of the Soviet blitzkrieg. NATO also lacks a strategy to deal with ongoing Soviet irregular warfare. However, all these problems, as well as other severe problems pressing on NATO, are primarily not military, but political in origin.

There have always been high-level "political officers" ready to adapt to prevailing political exigencies, regardless of the real dictates of the strategic situation, "political officers" who are quite comfortable in their armchairs. The overwhelming majority of the unit commanders, staff officers, and soldiers are doing more than simply serving time and "doing their job." In observing this year's NATO autumn maneuvers, we gained a very deep respect for the high morale and readiness to fight among the participating troops.

Profile of the maneuvers

The center of this year's NATO fall maneuvers was in NATO's northern flank, in an area ranging from northern Norway through Denmark into the northernmost West German state of Schleswig-Holstein, bordering Denmark to the north and East Germany to the east. The northern flank maneuvers included "Northern Wedding," which featured combined naval, air, and amphibious exercises in the Norwegian Sea and North Sea. This large exercise was accompanied by smaller exercises involving the ground forces of Norway and Denmark.

These exercises were followed in the last week of September by "Bold Guard" in Danish Jutland (the Danish mainland) and in Schleswig-Holstein. "Bold Guard," the largest single exercise of the Autumn Forge series, involved 80,000

West German and Danish troops, as well as marine infantry units from the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. Besides the large ground forces involved, NATO air units participated heavily.

Between the Elbe River (the border between Schleswig-Holstein and the rest of Germany, as well as the dividing line

In the various units we visited during the maneuvers, almost nothing happened as it was "supposed" to—not only did they have to reckon with unpleasant surprises from the "enemy," but snafus, the weather, a thousand and one "unforeseeables," all demanded flexibility and adjustments at a moment's notice.

between NATO-North and NATO-Central Europe) and the Bavarian-Austrian border lies NATO's "Central Front."

The biggest exercise on NATO's Central Front, called "Franconian Shield," took place between Sept. 19 and 25 in Lower Franconia (the area from the Würzburg region to the vicinity of Bamberg). Fifty thousand troops took part, from the West German Army (the Bundeswehr), the French Army, and the American Army. These exercises marked the first time ever that French troops stationed in West Germany had conducted joint exercises with their American and German allies in West Germany, outside the former French postwar occupation zone.

The exercises were concentrated in the area north and east of Würzburg. The bulk of the troops were there with 3,400 tracked vehicles, including German Leopard I and Leopard II main battle tanks, French AMX 30 tanks, and American M-60 and M-1 Abrams main battle tanks. Besides the 3,400 tracked vehicles, the NATO forces also deployed some 14,000 wheeled vehicles, 220 German and American helicopter gunships, and liaison and transport helicopters, while air force units flew ground-support missions for the infantry and armored units. The Allied 4th Air Army flew up to 250 sorties per day during "Franconian Shield."

The bulk of the participating units came from the Bundeswehr, namely the 12th Panzer Division, the 5th Panzer Division, the 2nd Panzer Grenadier Division, the 26th Airborne Brigade, and a reserve formation, the Home Guard's 54th Brigade. The French units took part with one brigade from the French 1st Armored Division, whose headquarters

is in Trier, a West German town on the Moselle, near the Luxembourg border. It is noteworthy that French units, for the first time since 1967, have been integrated into a NATO maneuver on West German soil.

U.S. troops participating included units from the 1st Infantry Division. The 1st Infantry Division is known as a "Reforger Unit," partly based in Ft. Riley, Kansas—its home base—and partly forward-based in West Germany. During the "Reforger" component of NATO's autumn maneuvers, the Ft. Riley units are flown to West Germany as a demonstration of U.S. readiness to rapidly reinforce its combat forces based overseas, in times of crisis.

The battle scenario

The scenario of the "Franconian Shield" maneuvers involved an attack by armored and mechanized infantry forces, launched against the Würzburg region from a line some 50 km northeast of Würzburg, the line more or less paralleling the border with East Germany, and thus simulating a Warsaw Pact attack. These "Red" attack formations were represented by the German 5th Panzer Division, the French Armored Brigade, and the German Airborne units. The defending "Blue" units comprised the German 12th Panzer Division, parts of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, German Airborne units, and the 54th Home Guard Brigade.

The task of the "Blue" defending units was to first fight a delaying action by several "Blue" units, to slow down the "Red" offensive. This was a matter of providing enough resistance to hold up the superior "Red" attack forces, while, in falling back during the delaying action, not giving up more than 40-50 km of territory to the advancing "Red" Army, during a time-frame of some 48 hours. The object of the "Blue" forces fighting the delaying action was to so wear down and weaken the "Red" forces during this time frame, so that the "Blue" forces—reinforced by fresh forces—could begin a counter-offensive by about the third day of fighting.

The maneuver scenario was based on the assumption that the attack by the superior "Red" forces would not be a surprise attack, and that NATO would have 2-3 days warning and preparation time available. One should note here, that most NATO units on the "Central Front" are often based some 150-200 km from the West German border with East Germany and Czechoslovakia. It does not require much imagination to realize what it would mean in case of actual Russian aggression—with 0-3 days notice—to transport American divisions withdrawn from Europe back to Europe over a distance of 6,000-8,000 km. That would be, should it actually be attempted, purely illusionary. In the "Franconian Shield" exercise, it took from Sept. 19 to 21 to move up the defending "Blue" units from their bases *in West Germany* to the region near the border where the "Red" offensive was underway. Imagine if they had to arrive from the *United States!*

The observer of the "Franconian Shield" maneuvers could

not avoid being impressed with the reality that it's extremely difficult, indeed impossible, to move up modern armored and mechanized units with their immense supply needs, to their jumping-off attack positions, without the situation having first been reconnoitered. It cannot be taken for granted that clear intelligence and reconnaissance results will lead to clear conclusions by the political leadership of the West.

A dangerous delusion

As far as the outside observer could tell, the "Franconian Shield" exercise was conducted under the assumption that nuclear weapons would not be used. This assumption—that a Soviet aggressor would mount his blitzkrieg offensive without using nuclear weapons—we consider illusory. For Soviet military strategy, the use of low-yield nuclear weapons in Central Europe in no way means automatic nuclear holocaust for the region to be overrun and conquered—which is intended to be occupied and exploited—and even less of a "holocaust" threat for the Russian homeland.

There are currently circulating in the West dangerous self-serving delusions about an alleged overcoming of the Sokolovskii Doctrine through an alleged "no longer nuclear" Ogarkov Doctrine. The view that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster has somehow "denuclearized" Soviet military strategy appears to us to be another self-serving delusion. The assumption in "Franconian Shield" that the reinforced defending forces will be in position to mount a counter-offensive after 2-3 days, therefore seems to be a self-serving delusion. In fact, NATO forces on the Central Front would have no choice but to employ nuclear weapons to prevent decisive breakthroughs by the aggressor.

A maneuver of such size and with such modern warfare technology as "Franconian Shield" imparts to the observer a unique, emphatic conception of time and space. It becomes uncannily clear what it means to have the men and matériel at the right place at the right time. The key Clausewitzian concept of "friction in war" is almost palpable. In the various units we visited during the maneuvers, almost nothing happened as it was "supposed" to—not only did they have to reckon with unpleasant surprises from the "enemy," but snafus, the weather, a thousand and one "unforeseeables," all demanded flexibility and adjustments at a moment's notice. Rigidity and sticking to doing things "by the book" in actual military operations inevitably leads to chaos and military disasters.

During a visit to units under heavy pressure from the "enemy," these units were ordered to disengage themselves from the "enemy," while airborne units would take up new defensive positions behind them. The paratroopers were not able to reach their designated positions in time, and arrived only later at another location. This showed that even modern electronic communications and command could change little regarding the demands placed on the art of operational leadership. More than ever, what counts above all is the person-

ality and leadership abilities of the officers, under extreme physical pressure, and above all under conditions of forced lack of sleep. And these are "just" maneuvers.

Executing a mission

Even a purely surface look at the events during "Franconian Shield" makes clear the meaning of the core operational concept of "executing a mission," one of the most prominent conceptions in German military history, whose importance is increasing today. The subordinate military commanders—unit commanders down to non-commissioned officers—are given missions and orders which they have the responsibility to carry out; they must decide concretely *how* to accomplish their mission. Thus, overblown staffs, which are stubborn, inflexible, and oppressive toward the subordinate unit commanders, are ineffective in actual combat. It seems that also outside the German Armed Forces, the notion of "executing a mission" is gaining ground in other NATO armies as well.

While visiting a Bundeswehr Panzer Battalion during the "Franconian Shield" exercises, the observers were more than a bit astounded to find that this battalion was *not* being commanded from two command tanks, normally positioned slightly to the rear of the immediate combat area. The command tanks are outfitted with modern electronic command systems and are in constant contact with both the Panzer companies during combat, as well as with the Brigade command.

The major in charge had an overview of the situation, which was continuously marked on his maps. But this major was not the Panzer battalion's commander; rather he was like the chief of staff (Battalion Executive Officer) to the battalion commander, who himself led his 40 tanks *up front* as commander of one of the Leopard IIs. He and his company commanders directly command the combat operations on the scene, he makes the necessary decisions on the spot, the staff supports him from the "rear," but cannot sway him in his decisions.

A battle between armored units made it emphatically clear that a defender operating against a superior opponent only had a chance by launching continual, surprise flanking attacks. Already today, NATO is far inferior to the Warsaw Pact forces on the Central Front. One can imagine to what demoralizing dimensions this inferiority would rise if American troops were indeed removed from the Federal Republic of Germany. The view that the Warsaw Pact's quantitative superiority can be offset by NATO qualitative superiority does not correspond to reality, or, at least, corresponds less and less to reality. If, for example, 100 fairly good East bloc tanks face 30 very good Western tanks of the Leopard II or Abrams M-1 type, and the 30 Western tanks succeed in destroying 90 of the East bloc tanks, before they themselves are destroyed, the enemy still has 10 tanks remaining to win the battle.

The first pre-condition for a successful flanking attack is

deception and camouflage. One must not be seen by the enemy, but must in turn be able to see the enemy. Even with the most modern reconnaissance methods, reconnoitering an area in depth is enormously difficult. The possibilities of effectively camouflaging units in both a natural outside environment and in villages and towns are extraordinary. The observer, admittedly lacking a sharpened experienced observation ability, was again and again astounded at how effective camouflage can be—how tanks, artillery, heavy equipment can be made to “disappear.”

Camouflage gives the defender advantages over the superior attacking forces, but at the same time, camouflage is—as a matter of survival—not to be overestimated in importance. In connection with concealment—in its broadest sense, meaning not only static units, but units on the move—night operations are taking on greater importance in modern warfare. For example, the majority of logistical operations, above all transport of troops and supplies, can only be carried out by night. Night warfare itself is also becoming more and more important. Night combat also offers for the well-trained and well-equipped defender considerable possibilities against a superior enemy.

Regarding the above-cited tank battle that the observers were able to follow, lighting conditions and concealment played key roles. One Panzer company, well camouflaged during the twilight hours, and well spread out, took up ambush positions, lying in wait for the “enemy.” The “enemy” armored attack, which had been spotted, had to occur in a sector about 4 km wide. “Enemy” reconnaissance tanks did not succeed in making out the “Blue” tanks lying in wait in their positions, and thus, a total of 7 “Red” tanks appeared during the last moments of twilight at a distance of about 2,500 meters (about 2,700 yards) away from the gun barrels of the “Blue” tanks. Then, one heard the crack of the practice ammunition of the “Blue” tanks, before the “Blue” forces rapidly changed their positions. The decision of the “battle” umpires was clear.

The big NATO autumn maneuvers in the Federal Republic of Germany, “Bold Guard” in the north and “Franconian Shield” on the Central Front, have demonstrated that an aggressor from the East will not have an easy time. NATO’s military capabilities can still make any aggression a hazardous enterprise. We are not saying this in a self-soothing manner, but taking into account the severe shortcomings in NATO’s defensive power. The real danger on both sides of the Atlantic to the security of the West lies in the inner political disarray of the West, expressed in plans to remove American troops and in European appeasement and crumbling will to resist Moscow. The problem does not lie in the population, but among the responsible political figures. The overwhelming majority of people in the maneuver areas were—in spite of many irritations and maneuver inflicted damages—friendly and positively disposed to the German, French, and American soldiers.

Soviets set sights on Korean peninsula

by David Barnes

Over the weekend of Sept. 6-8 in Pyongyang, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, more than 120 organizations representing 80 countries, attended the Pyongyang International Conference for Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean Peninsula, hosted by the government of North Korean dictator Kim Il-Sung. Participating along with the various European and Asian communist parties, were the South Korean National Democratic Front and the Japanese Socialist Party—the latter, one of the main groups opposed to the pro-Western defense policies of Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone. Among those nations represented were Mozambique, Malta, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, the People’s Republic of China, and the Soviet Union.

The purpose of the gathering, in the words of the official Soviet news agency TASS, was to voice “support for the concept of strengthening peace and security in Asia and the Pacific put forward by Comrade Gorbachov in his speech in Vladivostok.” As stated in the opening speech by North Korean Vice-President Yi Chong-Ok, “If a nuclear-free peace zone were established on the Korean Peninsula, this region would be cleared of the danger of nuclear war, and this would greatly help toward the conversion of Asia into a continent of good neighbors and cooperation, where a durable peace is guaranteed.”

Also in the North Korean capital that weekend was Bruno Kreisky, the Socialist International vice-president and one-time Austrian chancellor. Kreisky is an associate and avid promoter of Libyan madman Muammar Qaddafi, a key component of the Soviet-directed terror international, along with North Korea’s 100,000-man Spetsnaz force. Apparently Kreisky did not attend the conference itself, but was nonetheless received and lavishly banqueted by Kim Il-Sung.

The significance of the “peace” conference and Kreisky’s hobnobbing with the North Koreans must be seen in terms of the U.S.S.R.’s determination to replace the United States as a strategic presence in Asia and the Pacific Basin, utilizing the Korean peninsula as a vital military staging ground.

The Moscow-Pyongyang axis

Moscow has increasingly consolidated its control over the Kim regime, particularly since the North Korean-directed terror-bombing in Rangoon, Burma, in October 1983, which