

# Budget cuts shrink West German Army

by George Gregory

The Federal Republic of Germany is currently doing to its army, the Bundeswehr, the same thing that U.S. Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci is doing to American military capabilities. Extensive budget cuts, with little or no consideration for national security interests, are effecting the unilateral disarmament of the NATO alliance. In the West German case, the Bonn cabinet's February discussion of "The Army of the Year 2000," portends a steady shrinkage of the standing army, to be equipped with older and older, and less effective, weapons. The cuts mean, according to reports in Bonn, that the number of West German brigades will shrink from 48 to 42, and only 15 of these will meet the manpower and equipment readiness standard to qualify as "1A" combat-ready units.

These steps toward unilateral disarmament occur as the U.S. Senate debates the ratification of the treaty on withdrawal of intermediate nuclear forces from Europe. The INF treaty removes the accurate and effective U.S. Pershing 2 missile, while the Soviet Union does not reduce its nuclear threat to the Federal Republic and the rest of Western Europe at all. The next step is supposed to be a grand round of conventional arms-reduction agreements. In numbers used by the negotiating teams for the West in Vienna, this means that the Soviet Union would have to agree to demobilize (not merely relocate) *five times* more men and equipment than the West, for otherwise, the Soviets would cement both their superiority in pure mass and their invasion capability, at low risk, against Western Europe.

## Personnel strength of the Bundeswehr

Due to the downward plunge of the West German demographic curve, and also due to the 50,000-plus "draft dodgers," there will be a shortfall of 40,000 in the peacetime strength of the Bundeswehr of 495,000, beginning this year. This situation will continue, even when the extension of basic military service time from 15 to 18 months is put into force in mid-1989. Thus, without drawing upon the reservist-potential of the Bundeswehr, the Bundeswehr would shrink to 60% of its current strength, 339,000, by 1995, and to 297,000 by the year 2000. Presuming that the basic military-service and reserve potential drawn upon represents qualified person-

nel, capable of absorbing quality training and fulfilling assignments, this means that the restructuring of the Bundeswehr will entail keeping a larger pool of quality professional soldiers and officers, assigning them to training missions, and providing the core of brigades to be filled out in a mobilization.

This means that those soldiers and officers assigned to form the backbone of the reserves will no longer be part of the standing army, reportedly shrinking the number of brigades from 48 to 42. The 48 brigades now constitute the 12 Bundeswehr divisions. These divisions are the backbone of NATO's Forward Defense, which must be strong enough to deny the adversary the option of simply rolling into NATO territory with conventional forces.

The Federal Republic has a 1,000-kilometer border with the Warsaw Pact. The Bundeswehr is assigned 400 km of this long front, the armed forces of the allies 80 km, leaving large gaps, which thus require a high degree of mobility and reaction capability to defend. In the northern sector, the Dutch and Belgian brigades are already staffed only by a core of permanent personnel, so that the Bundeswehr effectively must cover their sectors also until the staging of the Dutch and Belgian forces were completed in a crisis. If 6 of the 12 Bundeswehr divisions are pared down in the way envisioned, this means the standing force covering the line of 400-plus km is reduced by 50%—most likely more, if only 15 of the brigades, 3.5 divisions, are at NATO "1A" category of combat-readiness. Neither the stripped down nor the regulation strength forces will therefore be fit for either Forward Defense or Direct Defense.

This situation is creating growing alarm within the armed forces. Gen. Henning von Sandrart, the current commander of AFCENT and former Army Inspector, issued the warning last year that the Bundeswehr is becoming incapable of fulfilling its Forward Defense mission. Among the 1,227 officers who left the Bundeswehr for early retirement last year, out of 3,188 who applied for early retirement, not a few were commanders who quietly admitted that the emerging guidelines would make it impossible for them to fulfill their missions, while it had been merely damned difficult up to now.

## Startling political implications

What does the shrinkage of the German Army mean politically, and in case of the outbreak of war?

Military professionals claim that they can assure a 48-hour "technical" warning time prior to a Warsaw Pact assault. "Technical warning time" means that military reconnaissance and listening posts would monitor signals of an impending attack 48 hours ahead of time. Politically, the Parliament must pass a resolution authorizing a mobilization of reserves, permitting the rump-brigades to be filled out.

With the basic forces of the Bundeswehr so denuded, Moscow's options for exerting pressure on any such decision will grow. Is it conceivable that parliamentarians will debate

and decide on a resolution to mobilize reservists at a time when Soviet spetsnaz guerrillas and other coordinated irregular-warfare operations are turning life in the Federal Republic into pure chaos, and parliamentarians are instilled with fear that the decision would only increase the chaos? Is it conceivable that the Parliament will take a decision to mobilize reserves at a point in the crisis, when such a decision cannot be kept secret, when large sections of the media and influential politicians claim that the decision would only escalate the crisis? This would be only a decision to fill out the rump-brigades to *peacetime strength* of 495,000, not to mention the decision to mobilize 1.34 million soldiers for war. The decision would clearly take many more days than mere "technical warning," and even the Social Democrats' wildest dreams of a 150-km-deep nuclear-free and heavy armor-free corridor east of the West German border, will not save the Federal Republic. There will be little if any integrity left of either Forward Defense or deterrence.

Moscow can either mobilize or only threaten to mobilize, knowing that the Federal Republic, and thus NATO as a whole, has no reaction-capability, and hence can impose its demands at will. Thus Moscow achieves all of its aims of disarming the West, at no cost or risk to itself. And Moscow receives the largest package of risk-free blackmail potential it could ever have dreamt of.

But the situation is worse. Nominally, the defense budget for 1988 will rise 1.5%, but this increase is already swallowed up by a 3.2% increase in operating costs, of which maintenance costs alone rose 6.2%. On the other hand, investment outlays will drop in 1988 by at least 1.9%, among which outlays for military facilities (NATO infrastructure included) will drop by 4.8%, and procurement by 1.6%. This contrasts with the hold-the-line sum quoted for procurements by the Ministry of Defense of at least 400 million deutsche-marks annually. A more detailed account would show that while a conservatively estimated 40% of priority targets cannot be hit with near-border artillery for lack of ammunition, 50 million DM was slashed from the munitions budget last year as part of the funds reallocated to help farmers over the Chernobyl panic.

Now, the figures stated last year by General von Sandrart, that the minimal investment in army equipment over the next 12 years is 118 billion DM, but the currently planned allocations are only 67 billion DM, are again making the rounds in the press. If no fist is slammed on the table hard enough to shatter these political and financial calculations, the 67 billion DM figure will go down in history as an optimistic dream.

Von Sandrart's judgment is backed up by a stern warning from his successor as Army Inspector, Lt. Gen. Henning von Ondarza: "The Army is left now with only 21% for investment, although it is generally agreed that we need to have 30%. At this rate, it will not be possible to keep our Army modern."

## U.S. plays cat and mouse with Kohl

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's visit to Washington Feb. 18-19 could only have added to the impression already prevailing in Bonn in the wake of the INF treaty signing: that the United States is playing cat and mouse with its most important NATO ally, and has already, in fact, decided to sacrifice West Germany to the tender mercies of the Russians.

As Kohl noted in his discussions in the American capital, the Germans are being exposed to alternating hot and cold showers. First, plans for U.S. troop withdrawal from Germany are made (through such channels as the Wohlstetter-Iklé report on long-term strategy); then the plans are denied; then launched again in the media, commented on, and then denied again. First, the U.S. insists that Germany agree to modernization of short-range nuclear weapons, and then that is described as being not so urgent.

In Washington, the Reagan administration put a gun to Kohl's head and the demand was made: Only if you Germans take over a major portion of the costs of stationing our troops will the troops remain in the Federal Republic, and only if you go along with the current insane U.S. economic and currency policies, will we Americans consider continuing security protection for Germany. Kohl was told that Reagan has already decided for a reduced American presence, but there may be some adjustments possible here and there if the Germans are "good."

But massive cuts were proposed for the U.S. defense budget just as Kohl arrived in Washington. The U.S. budget cuts speak much more loudly and clearly than the numerous contradictory statements by the politicians.

Kohl, Americans were told by the news media, thoroughly approves of the new arms pact, and came to Washington "to lobby for passage of the INF treaty." Kohl did do his best to ingratiate himself with his hosts by uttering the prescribed hosannas in praise of the treaty, but his mission was really to attempt damage control to preserve at least the scraps of the Atlantic Alliance.

"It is decisive for NATO that there be no zones of different security," he said at his press conference Feb. 22, after the subject of the Wohlstetter-Iklé report advocating a U.S. pullout came up. "We must see defense as one whole—indivisible."

Kohl described NATO as "a community of shared risk," which, he said, "is particularly true of West Germany, be-