

Ogarkov surfaces in Soviet pre-war mobilization

by Konstantin George

On Sept. 6, the Soviet news agency Tass announced that the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, had been replaced by his Deputy Chief of Staff, Marshal Akhromeyev, with Ogarkov being "transferred to another post." The announcement precipitated a spate of articles and commentaries in American and Western European newspapers and other publications proclaiming and "analyzing" Ogarkov's "ouster," or, in the majority viewpoint, his "definite demotion."

Sources in the intelligence communities of Great Britain and the United States either knew or thought otherwise—namely that the Ogarkov "transfer" signified a promotion. In the heyday of the September speculations and assertions concerning Ogarkov's alleged "demotion,"—assertions concurrent with the barrage of the "coming thaw" line preceding the Sept. 28 Reagan-Gromyko meeting, *EIR* publicly challenged the "demotion" claptrap and asserted: 1) Ogarkov's "transfer" signified a promotion to heightened responsibilities associated with wartime command functions, and 2) the promotion with its wartime command content was to be considered an ominous move.

"Disappeared," "disgraced," "demoted." These words describing Ogarkov's fate were heard often.

On Friday, Oct. 12, the question was settled as to who had been right concerning the Ogarkov matter, when he surfaced for the first time publicly since Sept. 6, in East Berlin, and was received by East German Party leader Erich Honecker. The stunning news was carried that day in a wire by ADN, the East German news agency: "This morning, Soviet Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov was received in the SED Central Committee Building by SED First Secretary Erich Honecker . . . to discuss a further increase in the fighting power and

combat readiness of the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact." Also present for the talks were member of the SED Politburo Egon Krenz, Honecker's heir apparent, head until last year of the party youth organization, the FDJ, and since promoted to Politburo member and Central Committee Secretary responsible for defense and security questions; Politburo member and Defense Minister General Heinz Hoffmann of East Germany's National People's army (NVA); Chief of Staff General Fritz Streletz; and Gen. Mikhail Zaitzev, Commander of the GSSD, the 400,000 Soviet troops in East Germany.

The very next day, Soviet Politburo member Grigorii Romanov, the Politburo member responsible for the defense industry, told Western journalists in Helsinki that Ogarkov is now the "Commander in Chief of the Western Theater of War," marking the first time that he has been listed this way by the Soviet leadership.

The stunning nature of the Ogarkov visit only begins with the fact of his resurfacing. He is received by Party head Honecker, is identified only as "Marshal," with no post cited, there is no mention that he "arrived" in East Germany or East Berlin, nor is he accompanied by anyone, military or civilian, whose functions are in the Soviet Union. The only other Russian present is General Zaitsev, since December 1980 Commander of the 20 combat-ready Soviet divisions in East Germany. Well informed West German defense sources are certain that Ogarkov's reception by Honecker was the culmination of a working visit to the GSSD, inspecting the Soviet forces who would form the first echelon of any blitzkrieg attack on West Germany.

Clearly coordinated with the Ogarkov tour were new changes announced in the Soviets' East bloc command. Three days earlier, on Oct. 9, in the context of a week-long stay in



When Ogarkov was transferred to another post on Sept. 6, we insisted that nothing had changed, while the rest of the Western news media claimed that he had been "demoted" and a "thaw" in Soviet policy would soon occur.

Czechoslovakia by the man who has been chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet armed forces since spring 1962, Marshal Aleksander Yepishev, Tass and the Czech news agency Ceteka announced that Colonel General Borisov, the Commander of the Central Group of Soviet Forces (the six Soviet divisions stationed in Czechoslovakia), was being "transferred"; he was received by Czech Party leader Gustav Husak, who "thanked him for his services." A General Yermakov will become the new Commander of the Central Group. As of Friday, Oct. 12, Yepishev was still in Prague.

'Western Theater of War'

As *EIR* has been stressing in articles and in published documentation, the Ogarkov appearance in East Berlin symbolized his appointment to command what the Soviets call the "Western Theater of War," which in peacetime entails overseeing all Soviet military preparations to achieve the capability to fight and win a nuclear war against the forces of the U.S.A. and its NATO allies, and, in wartime, all operations required to defeat the U.S.-NATO adversary. Concretely, Ogarkov is overseeing and directing:

- the accelerated Soviet buildup respecting strategic defense against nuclear missiles;
- the mammoth increases in Soviet offensive nuclear missile deployments in ICBMs, IRBMs (SS-20), short- and medium-range missiles (SS-21, SS-23, SS-22) and cruise missiles of air-, ground-, and sea-launched varieties;
- the beefing-up of the majority of the Soviets' so-called combat-ready "conventional" and air forces stationed in offensive posture in Eastern Europe and the western Soviet Union.

As *Jane's Defense Weekly* of Sept. 22 correctly stressed concerning Ogarkov's responsibilities: "...The ultimate goal of his command is total victory against the West. . . . Since

the main geographical direction of Soviet attention is the West, it is safe to assume that the title of Marshal Ogarkov would be Commander-in-Chief of the Western Theater of War. Marshal Ogarkov is entrusted with the actual conduct of the Soviet war."

Now that Ogarkov has surfaced, major Western newspapers such as the London *Times* and the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* are reporting him as heading the "Western Theater of War." The reader will note again our definition of the responsibilities embodied in this "Western Theater of War" command, that it "in peacetime entails overseeing all Soviet military preparations to achieve the capability to fight and win a nuclear war against the forces of the U.S.A. and its NATO allies, and, in wartime, all operations required to defeat the U.S.-NATO adversary."

We state this to counter the disinformation line that the "Western Theater" is limited to the Central European front and the Baltic, and flanked by a "Northwestern Theater" extending from Leningrad to the Polar region, and a "Southwestern Theater" embracing the Carpathian, Kiev, and Odessa military Districts in the Soviet Union and the "Southern Group of Soviet Forces"—the forces stationed in Hungary. This is not to imply that the "Northwest" and "Southwest" functions do not exist; they do, for the function of "surgical strike" options, as for example, the seizure of "Finnmark," the northernmost part of Norway, or similar types of operations in the Balkans and Turkey. However, it would be ludicrous to portray Ogarkov as confined to a "Western Theater" straightjacket, sandwiched between Leningrad and the Carpathians.

The command and the deployment features of the recent, largest Soviet ground, air, and naval maneuvers in postwar history (from June 28 to July 5; see *EIR*, July 17) and the largest Atlantic maneuvers ever conducted by the Soviet navy in the spring of 1984, demonstrated the actual content of the "Western Theater of War." The June-July maneuvers involved all Soviet forces in Eastern Europe (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary) and the military districts of the western Soviet Union, ranging from the Leningrad District (formally "Northwest") through the Baltic and White Russian districts, to the Carpathian District (formally "Southwest"). The huge April naval maneuvers in the North Atlantic rehearsed the simultaneous "break out" and wartime deployment of the Northern Fleet (the largest of the four Soviet fleets and formally "Northwest Theater") and the Baltic Fleet (formally "Western Theater"), functioning together as a single wartime combat force in the North Atlantic.

EIR, in its detailed coverage of the Soviet maneuvers of June 28-July 5 as an intense rehearsal of a blitzkrieg attack on West Germany, identified the three forward Soviet armies in East Germany, whose troops simultaneously left their barracks and deployed in combat maneuvers close to the West German border. Six weeks later, the highly respected military publication *Oesterreichische Militaerische Zeitschrift*, in its September/October issue, wrote: "It was reported that,

for example, in East Germany, the troops of three of the five Soviet armies stationed there, left their barracks and were deployed into field camps and exercise grounds. Soviet air assault commando brigades took part.”

Unparalleled war preparations

Ogarkov is overseeing and directing a Soviet strategic war buildup whose scope and accelerated tempo is awesome. In addition to the Soviet progress in anti-missile laser weapons, and the construction and deployment in outer space of manned space stations—programs which are ringing alarms in Pentagon and NATO circles—there is a relentless Soviet buildup going on across the board in the domain of strategic and nuclear hardware. These include the following programs:

- 1) The Soviets are in possession of, albeit “primitive,” satellite killers.
- 2) The Soviets are constructing a chain of ABM radar bases across the Soviet Union, and are ready to deploy two

new ABM missiles, the SA-10 and SA-12, to go with the radar system.

3) The Soviets have developed and could station three new ICBMs, including the SS-24 and SS-25, both mobile missiles.

4) Continued deployment of SS-20 launchers at a rate of one per week, bringing to over 400 the total number of SS-20 launchers now stationed.

5) The recently confirmed deployment of over 100 SS-22 1,000-kilometer (625-mile) range missiles with the Soviet forces in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The SS-22 is not only highly accurate, designed to take out key NATO military targets, but also has a MIRV (multiple-warhead) capability.

6) Development of five cruise missiles, of which at least three (each with a range of 2,500-3,000 kilometers, one air-, one ground-, and one sea-launched) have been in mass production. The other two are of intercontinental range, a cruise-

Why do Soviet generals frequently ‘disappear’?

Many words flooded the Western media about Soviet Marshal Ogarkov’s “disappearance” during the period of his absence from public view, from his “transfer to another post” on Sept. 6 to his surfacing publicly in East Berlin on Oct. 12. To anyone who has actually followed the activities of leading Soviet generals over the years, the only striking and “surprising” element of the Ogarkov “disappearance” is that he was absent *only* for five weeks.

As any competent observer of the Soviet military leadership knows—and dutifully records—Soviet generals “disappear” with regularity from public view or mention, after being “dropped” from a command post, and then a few years later (the average span being approximately two years) one reads in the Soviet media the news of their promotion to a higher post.

Famous, fairly recent examples include the Soviet General Maximov, the commander of the Turkestan Military District (bordering on Afghanistan and Iran) since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. Maximov had totally disappeared from public view and mention from 1976 to 1978. It later emerged that he had been sent to Afghanistan to supervise the key covert military mission of preparing the original pro-Soviet coup by Amin in 1978, and the subsequent Karmal takeover and Soviet

invasion of 1979. In 1979, the “disappeared” Maximov surfaced with honor, promoted to commander in chief of the Turkestan Military District.

Another prominent example is General Shkadov, head of the Cadres’ Department of the Soviet Defense Ministry in Moscow. Prior to that, Shkadov had been posted to Cuba where he played a very critical role on the scene, supervising and coordinating Cuba’s role in Soviet global military deployments. From the very recent past, during the period of Ogarkov’s “disappearance,” there was the Sept. 29 announcement that Gen. Vladimir Meretskov, till then the commander in chief of the North Caucasus Military District, had been named liaison of the Warsaw Pact commander in chief, Marshal Victor Kulikov, to the East German Armed Forces (NVA), replacing General Romanov, who had died in East Germany under very mysterious circumstances in May. Meretskov is perhaps a “record-holder” among the “disappeared” category of top generals, having publicly “vanished” from 1976 to 1980.

Last but not least, it is totally common that many Soviet generals holding some of the most critical troop command functions, never have their posts or command functions named. For example, the Soviet forces stationed in East Germany (the GSSD) comprise five active armies. *EIR* has confirmed the names of the generals commanding four of the five armies. All four were authors of key articles in the military publication, *Voenny Vestnik*, advocating a high speed offensive and surprise attack doctrine. The four army commanders are: General Pyankov, General Lobachev, General Chelobeev, and General Shein.

range capability which NATO does not have. U.S. Defense Secretary Weinberger at the recent Stresa, Italy NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting stressed his alarm at the Soviet cruise-missile program.

7) An extensive Soviet fleet modernization program, including a program of fitting over 20 Soviet nuclear attack submarines with 3,000-kilometer (1,875-miles) range cruise missiles.

8) Development of new directional equipment, including satellite bases to locate U.S. atomic missile submarines.

Immediately after Ogarkov's public appearance in East Berlin, and after Grigorii Romanov described Ogarkov as the "Commander of the Western Theater of War," the Soviet Defense Ministry released a statement carried by Tass and all Soviet newspapers including the military paper, *Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star)*, that the Soviet Union "has begun arming strategic bombers and submarines with cruise missiles," as so-called "countermeasures" to the U.S. stationing of Pershing and cruise missiles in Western Europe.

The alleged reason given for the deployment is a pure lie. The timing of the announcement was political. The actual arming of the 235 Soviet TU-M22 strategic bombers of the "Backfire" class, and the 115 TU-M20 "Bear" strategic bombers, had been under way for months. The missiles themselves, air-launched cruise missiles of about 3,000-kilometer range, had been in mass production for quite some time.

Ditto for the navy's submarines. A massive program began in 1984 to equip all 18 "Victor III" class nuclear attack submarines and the two submarines in service of the "Mike" and "Sierra" classes (both with the Northern Fleet), with 3,000-kilometer-range cruise missiles called the SS-N-21, which can also be fired submerged through the sub's torpedo tubes. The first of the older strategic missile subs of the "Yankee I" class is now being converted to an attack submarine, and fitted with the SS-N-21 cruise missile, while all six of the "Charlie II" class of subs (four from the Northern Fleet and two from the Pacific Fleet) are scheduled to be refitted with the SS-N-21 as well.

As with the well publicized introduction of the SS-21 and SS-23 missile systems into Eastern Europe, beginning in late 1983, and the recent stationing of the SS-22 with forces in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the crew training involved and the necessary "tooling up" required for fitting these systems on planes and ships occurred months and a few years before. This is to say nothing of the original R&D and missile-production decisions, which in all cases go back to the mid-1970s. That is, the same period of 1976-1977 identified (see *EIR*, Aug. 7, 1984) as the outpouring of writings on the necessity of overpowering the "enemy" in a lightning, devastating surprise blow, that would, among other things, take out within minutes as much of the "enemy's" nuclear, military, and logistical capability as possible.

Who are the Soviets kidding when they speak of "necessary countermeasures"? The announcement that a military

superpower has "already begun the deployment" of cruise missiles on at least 350 bomber aircraft, and, rock-bottom minimum, 27 nuclear submarines (a minimum average of 20 cruise missiles per sub), added to the continual buildup of the SS-20s, and the SS-21s, 22s, and 23s, reflects a brutal, calculated decision taken a good seven years prior, and rigorously followed through ever since.

Defense-related sources are now predicting that in 1985, the Soviets could start deploying a land-based intercontinental-range, ground-based cruise missile. Otherwise, as both West German and Austrian sources are insisting, the dimensions of the Soviet deployments of the SS-21 and SS-23 (120- and 600-kilometer range, respectively) are larger than being reported. One example is that the Soviet forces in both Poland and Hungary are equipped with the SS-21 and SS-23, facts never reported in the Western media.

The Soviets are also racing to develop and deploy the most effective possible ABM and cruise-missile defense system as quickly as possible, to minimize the damage that would be caused by whatever U.S. and NATO nuclear weaponry survived the initial Soviet strike.

The Soviets are also racing to set up a defense network of SA-10 and SA-12 anti-missile missiles across the Soviet Union (in conjunction with the above-mentioned radar base-building program); these missiles are also being installed in Eastern Europe, as part of a series of anti-cruise-missile bases now being constructed. British sources have confirmed that such an anti-cruise facility is in a well advanced phase of construction (if not complete) in the extreme southwest of Hungary, near the town of Kondorfa, some 15 kilometers (about 10 miles) from the Austrian border.

Conquest from a position of strength

To fight in the "Western Theater of War," Ogarkov has, in Soviet ground forces alone in Eastern Europe and the Western military districts of the U.S.S.R., from 96 to 102 combat divisions (including at least 88 motorized and armored divisions, 5 airborne divisions, and 3 artillery divisions, which are longer-range missile units, plus marine infantry forces, and several commando air assault brigades). Of these, 34 divisions are in Eastern Europe (20 in East Germany, 3 in Poland, 6 in Czechoslovakia, and 5 in Hungary). Then, there are the thousands of aircraft of the Soviet tactical air armies and air defense interceptors attached to these ground forces. There are the three "Western-directed" fleets, the Northern, the Baltic, and the Black Sea fleets, and a heavy proportion of the strategic missile forces. The "Western Theater of War" includes more than half the strength of the Soviet armed forces, at least two million active troops.

The Ogarkov "surfacing," the Romanov "leak" in Helsinki about Ogarkov's "new post," and the Defense Ministry announcement of missile deployments, all back-to-back, usher in the next phase of the Soviet countdown to a strategic showdown with the United States.