

Airborne operations spearhead 'post-nuclear' warfare

by Michael Liebig

The present dominant view of the international situation proceeds from the assumption that, by means of "crisis management," the superpowers could stabilize East-West relations as well as Third World conflicts through the medium term. This view expects events to unfold in a linear fashion only. Abrupt changes are ruled out, and indeed, there is the conviction that a new era of peace has been launched.

Unfortunately, such views overlook the fact that, in the West as well as in the Russian imperium, an enormous crisis potential has accumulated, both in the economic and the political sense. This crisis potential will, either in the short term or in the medium term, reach critical mass, raining down upon us convulsions and all sorts of changes and turns in the strategic situation.

Concerning the short- to medium-term perspective, we have to proceed from the fact that the Soviet leadership, confronted with increasing internal difficulties, will respond with aggressive thrusts outward, especially as the Soviet leadership correctly views the West as weak and growing weaker. Russia has at its disposal a wide range of political-military options against the West, including the exercise of pressure, blackmail, confrontation, and finally, the launching of actual warfare.

Ogarkov's 'school of thought'

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet Armed Forces have been reorganized in a comprehensive fashion. The key figure behind this reorganization was and is Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, whose "school of thought" has become firmly implanted in the minds of the entire Russian military leadership. Exemplary is Ogarkov's "star pupil," Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, the present chief of the general staff.

Ogarkov's primary concern has been to continually improve the industrial-technological base of the Soviet economy, or, in military terms, the question of "logistics in depth" for the armed forces. Under this policy, the "traditional" nuclear and non-nuclear components of the armed forces have been systematically and continually modernized. Qualitative increases have taken priority over mere quantitative increases. By doing so, through the greatly increased firepower achieved, Moscow has been able to a certain degree to "trim the fat" from its armed forces. The Soviet Union's arms control proposals tell us the content of the "trimmed fat," namely, those excess weapons systems that Moscow is readily willing to put on the negotiating table. Otherwise, the continually modernized "traditional" armed forces, above all the strategic nuclear weapons, remain the backbone of the Russian war plan, which views a total nuclear war as in no way either "unthinkable" or "impossible to wage."

Nevertheless, Ogarkov has inaugurated a new orientation in Soviet military strategy: The incorporation of "post-nuclear" weapons technologies and operational concepts for their employment.

"Post-nuclear" technologies are based on "new physical principles," whereby the entire scope of the electromagnetic spectrum can be used for creating weapons systems. The vast destructive power of "post-nuclear" weapons, unlike nuclear weapons, can be much more effectively directed to avoid superfluous collateral destruction. This holds true both for laser-based missile defense systems as well as for so-called radio frequency weapons directed against "soft" targets.

From this point on, however, we would like to focus not on "post-nuclear" weapons technologies as such, but on the question of "post-nuclear" *operational concepts*, whose ef-

fectiveness is not simply based axiomatically on the availability of operational "post-nuclear" weapons systems as such. "Post-nuclear" operational procedures exist here and now, in the present state of military technology, "standing on their own two feet," so to speak, ready to receive weapons based on "new physical principles," and to be perfected through the deployment of these weapons.

Ogarkov's "post-nuclear" operational concept has decisively influenced and shaped Soviet war planning against Western Europe. Since his departure as chief of the general staff (September 1984), Ogarkov, through his creation of the High Command West and its Western theater of war (TVD) under his personal command, has restructured the Soviet armed forces facing Western Europe, in conformity with doctrinal and structural changes in the Soviet Armed Forces related to war-fighting under "post-nuclear" technology conditions.

Soviet military strategy against Western Europe is premised on a surprise attack *blitzkrieg*-style destruction of the Western forces, with the aim being the military occupation of Western Europe as a whole, or, barring that, a considerable portion of it—above all, the Federal Republic of Germany. Through such an occupation, the economic potential of Germany, or all of Western Europe, would be placed at Russia's service, thus giving Russia the economic-industrial strength needed for world domination. The strategic goal of occupation implies that Western Europe's economic potential must be spared from destruction as much as possible.

Under such postwar considerations, an attack on Western Europe employing nuclear weapons is ruled out, as it would wipe out precisely the labor force and economic potential that is to be occupied and exploited. The use of nuclear weapons would carry the additional danger that Soviet territory itself could suffer nuclear destruction. To prevent this from occurring, the following is required:

1) The tactical and operational nuclear weapons stationed in Western Europe must be taken out immediately by means of non-nuclear offensive operations.

2) The totality of offensive operations must be conducted so rapidly, with successive, decisive breakthroughs at the onset of war, that the West's will to fight by employing the "last resort," i.e., nuclear weapons, collapses.

Moscow's threat to use nuclear weapons during the short time-frame in which the Russian non-nuclear *blitzkrieg* forces are scoring a stunning series of *faits accomplis* in Western Europe, is designed to dissuade above all the United States, as well as Great Britain and France, from launching nuclear strikes.

Ogarkov's "post-nuclear" military planning to conquer Western Europe cannot be understood as some sort of regressive "neo-conventional" type of warfare. Not only have the military technology parameters decisively changed, but the operational concepts themselves have acquired a new dimension. This remains the case, without any doubt, even though



Soviet troops practice landing of helicopter-borne troops behind enemy lines, 1987.

it is true that the Soviet "post-nuclear" *blitzkrieg* conception closely resembles that of the German military's war-thinking, from von Moltke (the elder) at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71, to Guderian and Manstein during the Second World War. Even more important, concerning the antecedents to today's Russian *blitzkrieg* conceptions, is the reintroduction of the 1930s military theories of Marshal Tukhachevsky and his cohorts, above all Tukhachevsky's "Theory of the Offensive."

This has been publicized through the writings of both Ogarkov himself and his protégé, Gen. Col. Makhmud Gareyev, one of the five deputy chiefs of the Soviet general staff, since early 1985. In 1984, Ogarkov wrote that the development of non-nuclear weapons technology had attained such proportions, that it had become possible "to target not only areas along the border, but the entire territory of a country with combat operations. This qualitative leap in the development of conventional weapons and war-fighting means will necessarily have as a consequence changes in the art of preparing and conducting operations."

The main conceptual element of the Ogarkov Doctrine of "post-nuclear" operations can be broadly summarized as follows:

- Long-term war preparations employing political-military disinformation (*maskirovka*) and pre-war psychological warfare.

- Long-term war preparations through covert “low-intensity” and irregular warfare.

- Long-term maintenance of the armed forces in a high state of readiness, so that they are capable of launching offensive operations without any prior “telltale” signs, and thus succeed in achieving surprise.

- Lightning-quick “opening phase operations” to begin the war, at the same time designed to ensure the war’s outcome.

- These “opening phase offensive operations” must reach deep into the rear of the theater of war and effectively paralyze the enemy’s military-political infrastructure.

- These “opening phase operations” deep in the enemy’s rear are conducted through pre-infiltration by special commando units (spetsnaz) and air assault brigades.

- The spetsnaz and airborne operations are accompanied by Air Force and long-range missile and artillery strikes against targets in the enemy’s rear.

- Large armored units, above all the corps strength “Operational Maneuver Groups” (OMGs), speedily advance deep into the enemy’s rear, to consolidate the gains scored in the “opening phase.”

The ‘opening phase of war’

The “opening phase of war” plays an overriding role in the Soviet doctrine of “post-nuclear operations.” In 1974, the U.S.S.R.’s military publishing house issued a book of writings compiled by one S.P. Ivanov, titled, *The Opening Phase of War*. In the book, the authors outlined historically how, since the 19th century, there has been an exponential growth in the significance of the opening phase of war as it determines the course of the entire war. The historical evolution of the “opening phase” is presented as a process of it becoming an ever more compressed opening phase. This temporal shortening of the opening phase has been achieved through an extraordinary increase in scope and quality of offensive breakthrough operations, conducted over an expanded theater of operations. In this more and more compressed time-frame, ever more complicated operations are being conducted. The “traditional” sequence during the opening phase of war looked approximately as follows:

- A “pre-mobilization period” of mostly concealed war preparations under conditions of increasing tensions.

- A partial or general mobilization.

- Declaration of war.

- Border skirmishes of limited intensity.

- The marshaling and equipping of the mobilized troop units and their transport to offensive staging areas near the border.

- The opening of large-scale operations by the main body of troops along a more or less continual front.

Still, during the time of the Napoleonic Wars, as a rule, several months would pass between the declaration of war and the beginning of large-scale military actions. The open-

ing phase shrank during the second half of the 19th century as a result of the Prussian mobilization system created by von Moltke (the elder), centered around the use of rail transport. The enemy rear, however, remained unreachable during the opening phase, and even after the commencement of large-scale operations, there remained a clear dividing line between the front and the rear.

Only during the period between the world wars were the technological pre-conditions and the operational concepts developed which not only totally compressed the opening phase sequence listed above, but overthrew the axiom that such a sequence would continue to exist. Now, the opening phase increased dramatically in importance. The new character of the opening phase was determined by new war-fighting technology and the development of new operational doctrines regarding:

- Armored shock forces and motorized infantry.

- Combat aircraft to support the Ground Forces and bombers to hit the enemy’s rear.

- Airborne units and special commando forces for operations deep in the enemy rear.

As we have noted, the opening phase concepts in the Ogarkovian “post-nuclear operations” doctrine are closely related to the character of the opening phase of war developed by military theorists during the 1930s. The above-mentioned General Colonel Gareyev wrote in 1985:

“The importance of the opening phase of war has further increased, because it can be the main and decisive phase of the war, determining to a large extent, the course of the entire war. . . . Under present conditions, the course of the war depends more than ever before on the extent and effectiveness of the measures that are taken at the exact moment the war begins.”

The conscious return by the Ogarkov school, since the mid-1960s, to the basic theories underlying the operational conceptions of the 1930s Tukhachevsky school, must also be seen as a reaction to Tukhachevsky’s murder and the Stalinist purges of the military leadership, which led to a regression in operational thinking inside the Soviet Union. This degeneration manifested itself in Red Army combat operations during the Second World War, not only through the staggering defeats with immense casualties suffered during the opening phase (June-October 1941), but even much later, when the tide had turned after the battles of Stalingrad (August 1942-February 1943) and Kursk (July 1943). This was shown by the ridiculously high casualty rates suffered by the Red Army in the offensives mounted from mid-1943 until the war ended in 1945.

Tukhachevsky had recognized, parallel with the German *blitzkrieg* school and French Gen. Charles de Gaulle (who was a brilliant exception to the dismal rule then governing the French High Command), the new character of the opening phase of war, namely, that war would begin with no delay, with combined arms operations of the highest intensity.

Airborne operations

Beyond that, military science pays tribute to Tukhachevsky for having conceptualized the importance of airborne operations in the opening phase of war. From the beginning of the 1930s on, Tukhachevsky had drafted plans for opening offensive operations through dropping airborne units up to 250 km behind the enemy lines, with such paratrooper drops to be assisted by fighters and bombers.

Already in 1928, the Red Army had begun employing airborne units in company strength against Muslim insurgents in Central Asia. Starting in 1931, the Red Army began holding military exercises that included parachute units with the mission of wiping out designated enemy forces and targets. In 1935, maneuvers were held in the Ukraine, where 1,000 paratroopers seized an airfield and held it until 5,000 airborne troops were landed there by plane. By 1938, the size of the Soviet Union's Airborne Forces had reached 6 airborne brigades, with 18,000 men.

In the Anglo-American world and in France, the development of airborne operations in Russia was followed with incredible astonishment, but no practical conclusions were drawn from such "exotic" developments. This is all the more curious, because it was American Maj. Gen. Billy Mitchell, who already in 1918 had developed a plan in which, instead of costly frontal offensives against the Germans on the Western Front in France, the Allies should land forces by air directly behind the German front lines. However, in contrast to the blind conservatism in the military leadership of the Western powers, the German Wehrmacht, starting in 1936, proceeded methodically with the formation of paratroop forces. Despite the limited use of these forces, they played an important part in the successful *blitzkrieg* operations of May 1940 on the Western Front and in the Balkans in 1941 (most notably, the May 1941 seizure of the island of Crete by airborne assault).

On the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1945, Soviet airborne operations consisted mainly of tactical commando and sabotage operations in close cooperation with partisan units operating behind the German lines. These operations reached on some occasions operational character, for example, the 1943 "Railway War," in which combined airborne and partisan forces had the mission on a broad front of disrupting as much as possible the rail lines supplying the German forces in the German rear during the July 1943 Battle of Kursk, the largest tank battle in history. The cumulative effect of these combined airborne/partisan operations over an extended period of time was very significant, even if such operations didn't have the character and weight of operations launched during the opening phase of war. These operations demonstrated the effect that airborne units and special forces can have when working in close coordination with local partisan and insurgent forces. At the close of the war, Soviet airborne and commando operations played a key role in the August 1945 offensive into Manchuria against the Japanese

Kwantung Army. Interestingly, Soviet military literature actually refers to the August 1945 Manchuria offensive as a *blitzkrieg*.

In the cited book, *The Opening Phase of War*, airborne operations mounted during the opening phase of the campaigns of the Second World War are evaluated as follows:

"In combination with simultaneous air assaults and energetic forward thrusts by armored and infantry formations at the front, airborne forces were able to frustrate strategic deployments of the enemy armed forces, spread panic among the enemy's civilian population and troops, and secure a high rate of advance by the [ground] offensive operations. If the [post-breakthrough] pursuit phase followed, the dropping of airborne forces along the enemy's lines of retreat meant a big help for the ground forces in the task of wiping out retreating enemy forces."

Directly following this evaluation of airborne operations, the book continues with an evaluation of insurgent operations in the opening phase of war. This evaluation, while saying not one word to describe Soviet irregular warfare operations, is nonetheless highly revealing concerning present-day spetsnaz special forces and modern Soviet irregular warfare theory.

"Subversive activities in the enemy's rear areas is no new phenomenon in military history. It has existed in all wars. But the extent and the forms which it acquired under the Hitlerite leadership, during the years both before and during the Second World War, are unprecedented. The Second World War showed that this type of warfare is extremely dangerous and must not be underestimated."

It appears that in the postwar years, above all during the time of Khrushchov, with the dominance then given to the newly created Strategic Rocket Forces, the Soviet Airborne Forces faded into the background. Their main task was then seen as operating in tandem with the Ground Forces to matter-of-factly seize the areas contaminated through nuclear offensive operations—in short, a routine mission, after the nuclear strikes had all but eliminated the enemy. During that time, it appeared that the Soviet Airborne Forces were placed under the command of the Ground Forces, and thus existed as an adjunct to the Ground Forces. This was to change by the mid-1960s, when the Soviet Airborne Forces (Vozdushno-Desantnyye Voisk, VDV) acquired the status of an independent branch of the Armed Forces and were placed under the direct command of the Soviet general staff for deployment in strategic operations.

In 1966, there appeared in the Soviet military press a trend-setting article by Colonels Andrukhov and Bulatnikov with the title, "The Growing Role of Airborne Forces in Modern Military Operations." The article stated:

"Airborne units, which have been dropped deep in the enemy's rear areas, must be in a position to carry out their mission without expecting that a quick link-up with the advancing Ground Forces can be achieved. . . . They form an

operational grouping of a singular character.”

In August 1968, Soviet Airborne Forces, together with spetsnaz special forces, proved their capabilities in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. They formed the invasion spearhead, occupying the Prague airport and other important airfields, and led in the “neutralization” of targeted figures in the Czech leadership. The airborne operations used in the invasion of Czechoslovakia are a typical example of the key role that such operations play in the opening phase of large-scale offensive actions.

The deployment of spetsnaz and Airborne Forces also occurred in the occupation of Afghanistan. To the extent that Soviet forces in Afghanistan achieved any tactical and operational successes at all, it was due to the use of spetsnaz and Airborne Forces. In the course of such operations, these elite troops acquired enormously valuable experience. The Soviet High Command rewarded the high performance of the spetsnaz and Airborne Forces by systematically granting preference to the promotion of the commanders of such operations during the 1980s. Since the middle of the 1980s, we have seen how, in dramatic fashion, such officers, either Afghanistan veterans, or other officers with lengthy career experience in directing commando and airborne operations, have climbed the ladder to top positions in the Soviet military command. This holds true for the following examples, to name but a few:

- Defense Minister D. T. Yazov (General of the Army)
- ➔ Deputy Defense Minister M. I. Sorokin (General of the Army)
- Deputy Defense Minister D. S. Sukhorukov (General of the Army)
- Deputy Defense Minister I. M. Tretyak (General of the Army)
- Deputy Defense Minister V. L. Govorov (General of the Army)
- Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) Commander in Chief B. V. Snetkov (General of the Army)
- GSFG First Deputy Commander in Chief I. Fuzhenko (General Lieutenant)
- Northern Group of Forces Commander I. Korbutin (General Lieutenant)
- Central Group of Forces Commander Ye. Vorobyov (General Lieutenant)

Soviet airborne potential

The qualitative and quantitative expansion of the Soviet military under Marshal Ogarkov’s direction has created a Soviet airborne potential which today looks as follows:

- Seven airborne divisions plus one airborne training division, all of which are under the command of the commanders in chief of the various wartime high commands and their corresponding theaters of war.
- At least 10 air assault brigades, each with 2,600 men, ready for war at an instant’s notice, and also placed under the

TVD command.

- At least four heliborne air-mobile brigades, each with about 2,000 men, located in the High Commands South and Far East.

- An undisclosed number of combat-ready independent airborne battalions, attached to the Army-level command. (In the Russian military, an Army is a corps-strength unit comprising three or more divisions under the old Ground Forces structure; under the new Ground Forces structure, two or more corps.)

- Approximately 30,000 spetsnaz special forces ready for immediate deployment. These are divided into three spetsnaz regiments (one for each main TVD—West, South, and Far East), 20 spetsnaz brigades (one for each of the U.S.S.R.’s 16 Military Districts and the four Groups of Forces, stationed in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary), four spetsnaz naval brigades (one for each fleet: the Northern Fleet, the Baltic Fleet, the Black Sea Fleet, and the Pacific Fleet), and 41 independent spetsnaz companies, one for each of the 41 Armies.

It is astonishing how little attention the West has given to this, even in purely quantitative terms, enormous airborne potential of the Soviet Union, which is strictly designed for offensive operations. It’s even more astonishing when one considers that the VDV and spetsnaz units are, in a qualitative sense, the true elite of the Soviet Armed Forces. The 1988 edition of the U.S. Pentagon’s *Soviet Military Power* at least mentions—albeit strictly in a military-technical fashion—Soviet “post-nuclear” developments regarding laser and radio frequency technology, but does not even devote one word to the qualitative and quantitative growth of Soviet airborne potential as the core of “post-nuclear” military operations. The last edition to be published (1985) of the West German Defense Ministry’s *White Book* devoted not a single word to the threat posed by Soviet airborne units. Also, based on what was written in *Armed Forces Balance NATO/Warsaw Pact*, published by the West German Defense Ministry in December 1987, the Airborne Forces of the Warsaw Pact appear not to exist.

The post-nuclear war plan

How are we then to imagine the mission of the Soviet Airborne and spetsnaz units in the framework of Ogarkov’s “post-nuclear” war planning? What role would the Soviet Airborne and spetsnaz units play, or in any case, considerable portions of them, in a war in the near or not-too-distant future, with the assumed goal being the conquest of Western Europe?

I have, unfortunately, no access to classified information from sources either in the East or in the West. On the basis of publicly available material, I can only make well-founded assumptions and draw hypothetical conclusions. That said, I can venture to say that, in the near or not-too-distant future, a situation is possible in which the Soviet leadership could embark militarily on a flight-forward policy. This could be

triggered by a collapse of food supplies and/or broad insurrectionary movements inside the Soviet Empire, occurring alongside a crisis-ridden and weakened NATO. Under such a situation, should the Soviet Union exhaust its options of trying to secure the submission of Western Europe through political destabilization, pressure, intimidation, and blackmail, and decide to go for military conquest, then this would take neither the form of a nuclear war nor of a new version of the Second World War. What would come into play would be the Soviet "post-nuclear" war plan.

A) Bracketed by a disinformation campaign combined with psycho-political warfare, the "first wave of attack" in the opening phase of "post-nuclear" warfare consists of "militant actions" by terrorist and other groups trained and prepared to use violence in the enemy areas that are targeted. Hidden and indirect guidance and control is exercised over such "militant" groups, which are used to physically eliminate or politically incapacitate Western leadership figures, and otherwise conduct wide-ranging sabotage actions. When such actions of relative "low intensity" are conducted over a longer period of time, the entire recorded results, cumulatively, are considerable.

B) "Militant" groups form an effective addition to secretly infiltrated spetsnaz special forces and their infrastructure of local support agents, built up over the long term. This spetsnaz "in-place" infrastructure secures the logistical and technical equipment for intelligence functions as well as ensuring reliable intelligence over the area in question. With the infrastructure in place, the concealed smuggling in of spetsnaz agents, employing many types of infiltration routes, can then proceed almost without risk. The smuggling in of chemical weapons, or in the foreseeable future, electromagnetic weapons, is possible, if done in small numbers, or if some or most of the components can be readily procured in the civilian markets of the West. (Obviously, miniaturized nuclear weapons of very low yield, so-called "knapsack atom bombs," could also be used by spetsnaz units). Certainly, the mass of the spetsnaz forces would not be infiltrated beforehand, but even a relatively small number of highly qualified spetsnaz can suffice to liquidate or destroy the highest priority human and material targets. The mission of the spetsnaz infiltrated beforehand is not of a tactical nature, but has the goal of effecting the maximum paralysis of the political-military leadership structure in the nations under attack. The pre-infiltrated spetsnaz are to paralyze the personnel and physical-organizational structure composing the "brain and nervous system" of the entire NATO defense capability. Beyond that, pre-infiltrated spetsnaz have the mission above all to achieve total surprise and strike against the enemy's offensive forces.

C) Timed with the operations mounted by the pre-infiltrated spetsnaz, the whole array of airborne operations proceeds: strikes by commando forces, by spetsnaz and paratroopers of the airborne divisions and air assault brigades, to

take out the enemy installations of crucial importance deep in the rear of the Soviet offensive. The targets of these airborne operations include: depots with special types of munitions (nuclear and chemical warheads, and the other most critical munitions depots), major troop units, command, control, and communications installations, missile bases, airfields, etc. Through the elimination of such installations, hundreds of which exist in the Federal Republic of Germany alone, the NATO forces' ability to conduct a war is to be paralyzed.

D) Alongside commando operations of up to company strength, company-, battalion-, and regimental-size units, either parachuted or ferried by helicopter, will seize and hold key terrain and roads, bridges, and road junctions required by the advancing Ground Forces. From these airborne bridgeheads in the rear area, motorized "raids" can be carried out to further disorganize the enemy's defenses, i.e., prevent the formation of fall-back lines of defense, and sow panic and confusion.

E) These airborne operations are supported by the Air Force's fighter-bombers and by attack helicopters as well as missile strikes and long-range artillery.

F) By the time the armored and motorized infantry formations have crossed the border, the operations mounted deep in the rear area by the spetsnaz special forces and paratroopers have already created an extensive list of *faits accomplis*.

The 'gliding parachute'

Together with this rough and incomplete sketch, one could introduce the Commander in Chief of the TVD West, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, and his "post-nuclear" plan of attack against Western Europe. The West appears, at least, to have begun to take seriously the massive threat to Western Europe posed by the Soviet Ground Forces, the Soviet Air Force, and the missile-artillery units. To my mind, this does not appear to be the case concerning Soviet airborne troops and spetsnaz special forces. This blindness appears to manifest itself above all regarding the threat posed by the heavy weight accorded in Soviet military doctrine to the role of the pre-infiltrated spetsnaz and airborne commando operations.

In recent years, the technical possibilities have grown enormously for parachuting—undetected, and at great distances behind enemy lines—commandos in up to company strength. Previously, paratroopers had to be dropped from a plane directly over the landing zone. If one plans a parachute drop in the enemy rear, the air transport of these forces across the enemy's border and through enemy airspace is extremely dangerous, if not impossible. With the exception of only a few aircraft maintained by the American Special Forces, most of the transport aircraft available in the East and the West are too slow, and not suited for low-level flying at night or in bad weather. That may change in the future through "stealth" technology and progress in electronic warfare. For

the immediate future, the problem in dropping paratroopers, or ferrying them by helicopter, remains, as both aircraft and transport helicopters are extremely vulnerable in enemy airspace.

The way out of this dilemma has been provided by the "gliding parachute." Modern, right-angled gliding parachutes possess a glide-descent ratio of approximately 3:1, i.e., for every meter of descent the gliding parachute moves three meters horizontally. In the course of developing the gliding parachute, the glide-descent ratio is being continually increased. Through the optimal use of wind conditions, glider flights with such a parachute of up to 40 km are today already a routine, problem-free occurrence. Through the utilization of the relevant geophysical data, the navigable gliding parachutes fly with precision to their assigned landing zones. Navigation is without technical means, done simply with compass, altimeter, and stop watch. The success rate of pinpoint landings made by experienced gliding parachute flyers is well above 95%.

The military implications for airborne commando operations is obvious. The dropping of commando troops can occur outside of enemy airspace by means of gliding parachutes dropped from aircraft. This occurs, as a rule, from a height of between 6,000 and 8,000 meters. Any remaining danger to the aircraft by enemy air defenses can be minimized through electronic counter-measures (ECM). Gliding parachute flyers cannot be identified by radar and can operate at night and in very bad weather during the day. Navigation can even be conducted under conditions of "zero visibility," and to assure a secure landing, a cloud cover of as low as 100 meters still enables the flyer to carry out last-minute steering maneuvers to avoid obstacles on the ground. Modern gliding parachutes allow the transport of about 50 kg of equipment, which enables one to transport, in component form, nuclear, chemical, and electromagnetic weapons.

With the gliding parachute, in the opening phase of an offensive war, it's conceivable that troops could be dropped at great heights from "civilian" aircraft of the state-owned airlines of the Warsaw Pact countries, in international civilian air corridors. In the Soviet Union, the procedure has been developed in which Aeroflot aircraft can be commandeered for military purposes. Using overflights of one aircraft after another, large numbers of commando troops could be dropped, to simultaneously reach many different targets.

Already in 1975, scattered reports appeared in the Western press about military exercises involving East German paratroopers using gliding parachutes. Already then, these National People's Army (NS) units, jumping from a height of 4,000 meters with gliding parachutes, had landed on targets 16 km away. Since then, the development of the gliding parachute has gone considerably further. Viktor Suvorov, the former spetsnaz officer who defected to the West, has also reported on operations by Soviet spetsnaz and paratroopers using gliding parachutes. I would say, in addition, that it

is certainly conceivable that the East has drawn conclusions from the relatively small but high precision pilotable transport gliders used by the German paratroopers at the start of the Second World War. The experiences gained in using gliding parachutes has opened enormous possibilities for the Airborne Forces of the Warsaw Pact, regarding commando operations in the framework of "post-nuclear" warfare.

The *NVA Handbook for Paratroopers* (East Berlin, 1982) makes clear that airborne commando operations in the rear areas of Western Europe, i.e., point "C" in our above outline, have become the main mission of the Airborne Forces of the Warsaw Pact. The book's foreword states, "The fulfillment of combat missions in the enemy's rear areas demands from all NVA paratroopers a high level of political consciousness, their unshakable loyalty to the socialist fatherland and the socialist military coalition, embittered hatred of our enemies, and the highest degree of theoretical and practical military knowledge. . . . They must develop the extraordinary toughness required to withstand the high physical demands and mental-psychological stress that accompany the performance of missions deep in the enemy's rear. . . . Beyond that, this book's task is to provide all paratroopers with general knowledge and practical tips, as well as specifically dealing with how one operates in the enemy rear."

More than 50 years ago, a group of high-ranking Soviet officers visited France and toured the Maginot Line. They were hardly impressed at all at the idea of static defense, then made literally "concrete," and told their French hosts that airborne forces could simply jump over the Maginot Line and decide the war to the rear of the Maginot Line, deep inside France. This ought to serve as a warning concerning the defense of Western Europe, today and in the future. The defense of Western Europe must orient itself to the actual nature of the threat posed, and never forget that it's never wrong to learn from a dangerous enemy.

The real strength of the Soviet Union stems from the West's own self-imposed weakness. The true weakness, or Achilles' heel, of the Soviet Empire lies in its rear areas, in the captive peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and the Ukraine. If the West wishes to produce a genuine deterrence against Marshal Ogarkov's "post-nuclear" operational plans to conquer Western Europe, this will only succeed when Ogarkov can no longer count on the rear of the Western TVD being secure. To accomplish this:

- 1) The airborne and special forces of the West must be reorganized with precisely such a mission in mind, rendering the Western TVD incapable of mounting a successful offensive by turning the tables and waging a successful "opening phase" knock out of the forces, logistics, and installations in the Western TVD's rear.

- 2) The West's airborne and special forces must be expanded in size and quality, immediately and to the extent required to fulfill successfully such an "opening phase" of war mission.

SPETSNAZ



SPETSNAZ

In the Pentagon's "authoritative" report on the Soviet military threat, *Soviet Military Power 1988*, the word *spetsnaz* never even appears. But *spetsnaz* are Russian "green berets." Infiltrated into Western Europe, *spetsnaz* have new weapons that can wipe out NATO'S mobility, firepower, and depth of defense, before Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov launches his general assault.

ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE WEAPONS

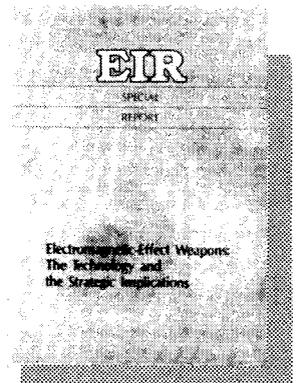
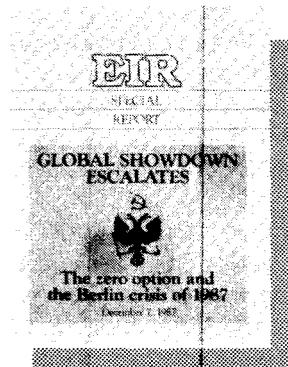
At least the Pentagon report mentions them—but only their "defensive" applications. In fact, they can be transported by *spetsnaz*, finely tuned to kill, paralyze, or disorient masses of people, or to destroy electronics and communications. With EMP, as strategic weaponry or in the hands of *spetsnaz*, the Russians won't need to fire a single nuclear missile to take Europe.

EIR

SPECIAL REPORT

**WHAT THE
PENTAGON WON'T
TELL YOU. . .**

Two EIR Special Reports will.



Global Showdown Escalates,
525 pages, \$250

Electromagnetic-Effect Weapons,
100 pages, \$150

Order from: EIR, P.O. Box 17390,
Washington, D.C. 20041-0390.

In Europe: EIR, Nachrichtenagentur
GmbH, Dotzheimer Str. 166, D-6200
Wiesbaden, FRG, Phone (06121) 884-0.