

# Soviet Navy given new wartime command

by Konstantin George

Prior to the massive naval exercises by the Soviet Fleet in the North Atlantic in July, the Soviet Navy underwent a wartime command reorganization embracing three of the four fleets in that navy.

The exercises that followed were massive, involving more than 100 warships, submarines, and supply vessels, making these the largest naval exercises in Soviet history. They provoked correspondingly massive surveillance by NATO, whose officials expressed themselves "astounded" at the Soviets' degree of readiness. And yet, the mere size of the maneuvers may not have been their most important feature. Also involved was the exercise of a new, wartime naval command.

## A unified command

The three Soviet fleets covered by the command reorganization are the Northern Fleet, based in Murmansk, the Baltic Fleet, and the Black Sea Fleet. Each of the three fleets received a new commander-in-chief. These are the three fleets (the fourth fleet in the Soviet Navy is the Pacific Fleet) which, in time of general war, would engage in combined Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean-Black Sea operations against the United States and NATO. In the event of more limited Soviet warfighting in the European Theater, they would be deployed in either the "Western Strategic Direction" facing Europe, or the "Southwestern Strategic Direction," facing the Balkans and Turkey.

The new commander-in-chief of the Soviets' Northern Fleet, which includes most of the modern Typhoon and Delta III class nuclear missile submarines, the nuclear-powered battle cruiser Kirov, and many modern warships and nuclear attack submarines, is Adm. I. M. Kapitanets, who replaces Adm. A. P. Mikhailovskii in that post. Kapitanets was until recently the commander-in-chief of the Baltic Fleet. Kapitanets's successor in the Baltic Fleet is his former chief of staff, Adm. K. V. Makarov.

In effect, therefore, the command changes place the Northern Fleet and the Baltic Fleet under the unified wartime command of Admiral Kapitanets.

Kapitanets takes over a Northern Fleet that is expanding at an alarming rate. Until very recently, the Northern Fleet had no anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft carriers. By the end of 1985, it will have two.

In June, the carrier Kiev arrived in Murmansk after a two-year re-outfitting in a Black Sea shipyard. The last carrier of

the Kiev Class, the Kharkov, is now undergoing sea trials in the Black Sea. Then, it, too, will be brought up to the North to join Kapitanets' fleet.

The new head of the Black Sea Fleet is Vice-Admiral M. Khronopulo, former first deputy commander of the fleet, who was named to replace Adm. A. M. Kalinin during the last week of June.

This new wartime unified command of all the Soviets' naval forces facing westward was rehearsed during the recent North Atlantic maneuvers, where a single exercise was conducted by units from the Northern Fleet, the Baltic Fleet, and the Black Sea Fleet, under the overall command of Admiral Kapitanets, the Northern Fleet commander. The Baltic Fleet, commanded by Admiral Makarov, participated in the exercises with a task force led by the flagship Grozny, a Kynda Class missile cruiser.

## Ground Forces command shifts

The command reorganization of the Soviet navies facing the United States and NATO, follows a year of extensive and still ongoing command restructuring of the Soviet Ground Forces. To date, the commanders of the Soviet Groups of Forces stationed in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia have been changed, as have nearly all the commanders of military districts in the western Soviet Union. Taken together, these Ground Forces' command shifts embrace the first and second echelons of Soviet invasion forces facing Western Europe.

At the same time, both the Soviet naval maneuvers and recent land maneuvers have revealed a new pattern of training designed to quickly upgrade combat capabilities throughout the Red Army. The new approach involves deployment of elite units from one district (or fleet) to another district, so as to produce a "shock effect" on training programs in the latter.

Soviet military media coverage of July's big land maneuvers in the Transcaucasian Military District—code-named *Kavkaz 85*—indicated that units from the Byelorussian Military District may have participated in these exercises, even though that was never officially announced.

The Byelorussian Military District is the headquarters of the Soviet "High Command West," and during this past winter, it was the test district for radical changes in training overseen by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov personally. Ogarkov at the time was the commander in chief of the High Command West. The units brought over to the Caucasus from Byelorussia were presumably the products of Ogarkov's new methods.

In the July naval maneuvers, a similar pattern was followed under Admiral Kapitanets. An elite task force of landing ships and naval infantry (marines) from the Baltic Fleet practiced an assault landing on the shores of the Kola Peninsula—the home territory of the Northern Fleet's own marine brigade, the 63rd ("Kirkenes") Naval Infantry Brigade. The Kirkenes' assigned war-time task is the seizure of northernmost Norway, at the very outset of war.