

Twilight: 2000 Background

Overview:

The year is 2000 AD. For five years the armies of the world have fought back and forth across an increasingly devastated planet. Chemical weapons, biological agents, tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, every horror from a technological cornucopia of destruction was used. And in the wake of war came famine and plague, until well over half of the planet's population had been carried away.

But the war goes on.

Most civilian governments have collapsed under the burden of massive casualties and a total breakdown of the communication and transportation systems. Only the military has survived as a cohesive force. For many soldiers, particularly those outside their own national borders, surrounded by a foreign and increasingly hostile population, the army has become their country.

But even the pressures of unit loyalty and wartime discipline have not been sufficient to prevent the gradual disintegration of the armed forces. The countryside is infested with bands of murderous marauders, made up largely of deserters, preying on soldier and civilian with equal ferocity.

In the spring of the year 2000, the German 3rd Army launched its final offensive against Poland. It was postponed due to late rains -- the soldiers were delayed in getting their fields planted. The objective was to clear the Baltic coast of Polish and Soviet forces and thus gain control of the plentiful Baltic fishing and the Vistula River barge traffic.

When the offensive finally got under way it was spearheaded by the US Eleventh Corps, because the US troops were less tied to their garrison areas than were the Germans. The initial drives were successful, with two US divisions breaking loose and conducting deep penetration raids into the enemy rear area. While the 8th Division (Mechanized) headed for the port of Kaliningrad and a link-up with the Free Latvian Army, the 5th Division (Mechanized) headed southeast toward Lodz. Then, everything started to come apart.

The last battle-worthy remnants of the Polish army counterattacked, and battered themselves to pieces against the NATO troops. When the dust had settled, though, the last heavy equipment of the Eleventh Corps was burning junk. The remnants of four Soviet armies went on the offensive against the base camp area of the 3rd German Army, and German troops began drifting west to bolster the defenses of their homes. Finally, two additional Soviet armies, the 4th Guards Tank and 22nd Cavalry, rolled across the Polish frontier from Byelorussia and hit the US 5th Division. With a combined strength of 21,000 men and almost a hundred modern tanks, the two Soviet armies plowed into the 5th Division near the Polish city of Kalisz.

Brief Timeline:

1991: In August of this year, the hard-liners of the former Soviet Union stage a coup d'etat. Most important buildings and radio stations are seized by Red Army units commanded by hardliner-loyal soldiers. Gorbachev is removed from power for "health reasons." Protesters gather around the Soviet Parliament building, along with a few dissident military units, to defend Boris Yeltsin and the Parliament. On the 20th of August, a KGB "Alpha Team" spearheads an assault on the parliament building. By the end of the onslaught, President Yeltsin, along with an estimated 800 others, are dead.

1992: In a referendum on Republican leadership, John Tanner, the Democratic governor of California, wins the election. His vice president, Deanna Pemberton (a former representative from Ohio), becomes the first woman to hold that post.

1994: Pro-democracy movements spring up again in China. This time, however, the protesters are better organized and armed. Protesters in some regions of northeast China hold out for several months in spite of Chinese military intervention. Military commanders in some parts of China seize control of the civilian governments, becoming modern versions of China's traditional Warlords.

As a brief footnote, researchers in France and the United States announce the discovery of a vaccine that appears to be fully effective against the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Testing on human subjects is quickly approved by the FDA after fierce pressure from various lobbying groups.

1995: An increasingly hard-line central government in China begins demanding "adjustments" on the Sino-Soviet border, based primarily on the hopes that the disarray and internal dissent in the new

Soviet Union will make the concessions easier to obtain. When talks produce no tangible results, Chinese Army junior officers stationed on the border in China provoke border skirmishes.

The Soviet Union retaliates by launching a massive invasion, ripping deep into China's northern industrial heartland. After rapid initial successes, however, the assault grinds to a halt as China mobilizes its enormous reserves. Guerrilla actions in the Soviet rear areas force the commitment of additional troops for security, and the Soviet troops find themselves in a quagmire.

Germany announces that previous agreements on the size and location of their military forces are "obsolete in relation to the current European situation" as they start mobilizing reserve units and increasing their levels of readiness.

1996: After some high-level meetings between worried Polish leaders and Soviet officials, an agreement is reached in Warsaw. This new treaty, signed by delegates from the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, is officially titled the Treaty on Collective Security. It is soon labeled the New Warsaw Pact by the rest of the world.

During a round of reserve call-ups in Poland, some ethnic Germans refuse to be sent to the Far Eastern front. Heavy handed crack downs by Polish police launch a barrage of protests from German politicians. The Poles counter that German provocateurs incited the riots. Tensions along the border run high, and several skirmishes and artillery duels occur throughout June into the early weeks of July. German troops cross the border on the 27th of July in retaliation for a "full-scale attack" launched by Poland. The Polish army, bolstered by Soviet units not yet deployed to China, fight back. With the help of the Soviet Union's air forces, most of which remained in Europe during the Sino-Soviet War, Poland manages to blunt the attack.

By late November, Germany is in serious trouble. The numerical and qualitative advantage of the Soviet air forces over the German *Luftwaffe* has caused huge losses in some units. The stalemate of the last few months is broken when a Czech division manages to break through the lines and drives straight for Berlin. The Soviet Union announces its intention to invade and occupy part of Germany "for future security." Germany pleads for assistance from its NATO partners.

While European NATO members debate the request, US Army forces cross the frontier into Poland. Within a week, British and Canadian forces have joined the battle to defend Germany. The governments of France, Belgium, Greece, and Italy protest the battle, and they soon withdraw from NATO.

1997: NATO enjoys many gains during the early months of the year. The Soviet Union begins withdrawing forces from Asia to bolster their weakening lines in Europe. By the first week of July, Warsaw is under siege and German army forces are on Soviet soil. On the 9th of July, in a desperate attempt to prevent a complete collapse on both fronts, the Soviet Union begins using tactical nuclear weapons. In Europe, they are used very sparingly; however, China is hit hard. Entire Chinese army units are vaporized, and deep strikes into the Chinese interior deliver numerous nuclear warheads on industrial and population centers. The Chinese response is immediate but ineffective, since Soviet units have already dispersed in preparation to the counterattack and the Soviet Anti-Ballistic Missile system is functional and effective.

NATO matches the tactical nuclear strikes in Europe blow-for-blow, but Soviet attacks, coupled with the slow influx of Soviet units from China, force the NATO forces to withdraw. The siege of Warsaw is lifted by September.

The nuclear exchange continues for several more weeks, always a limited strike of few warheads, as neither side wants to appear to be launching a massive attack. The exchanges gradually escalate, and soon ICBM's and SLBM's are striking targets deep in the Soviet Union and on the continental United States. On Thanksgiving Day, 1997, a 250 kiloton nuke detonates over Washington, DC, killing President Tanner.

1998: The harsh winter of '97-'98 forestalls the inevitable, as the effects of a nuclear exchange are felt worldwide. Outbreaks of epidemic proportions occur all over the world as the spring thaws uncover the many bodies left behind from the nuclear exchanges, and a devastated health care system finds itself unable to handle casualties of this magnitude. The war in Europe slows to a standstill, as petroleum supplies are used up and food stocks dwindle. By year's end, most warring factions are busy setting up cantonments and trying to ensure sufficient food supplies are available.

1999: Because of the low troop densities in Europe, few major maneuvers or exchanges occur. Most attacks are little more than infiltration raids aimed at disrupting opposing supply lines or lines of

communication. Most surviving units are less interested in attacking their formal enemies than they are in fighting off roving marauder bands, the latter composed of deserters from both sides.

2000: Local recruiting of personnel by both sides in the conflict results in often confusing combinations of troops. Former Warsaw Pact soldiers are informal members of the US Army, and NATO troops are billeted with Soviet divisions. The battle lines become static.

In what would probably be the last major offensive of the war in Europe, the Third German Army launches a massive operation to sweep Warsaw Pact forces out of northern Poland.

The United States 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) spearheaded the German 3rd Army's raid on the 19th of June. Over the next three weeks, the 5th traveled southeast from Chojnice towards the central Polish city of Lodz, stopping every few days for maintenance and the distillation of alcohol for fuel. An assault was launched on the 14th of July at Lodz, but massive resistance was encountered. Units that had been placed in Byelorussia by intelligence estimates were identified in the ensuing counterattacks. Either there was a massive error in intelligence, or the Pact had managed to move forward forces with amazing speed for this post-nuclear era. By nightfall on the 17th of July, the 5th was consolidating itself around the city of Kalisz.

With fresh Polish and Soviet forces to the north, east, and west, the division commander decided that he would order the 5th to attempt a breakout south, with the hopes of being able to withdraw back to Germany.

This brings us to the present.