

Ponomarev Leads Soviet Diplomatic Initiative To Gaullists

Dec. 16 — Boris Ponomarev, a Central Committee Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, has just completed a week long visit to France, where he led a Soviet parliamentary delegation. He met with members of the Foreign Affairs committee of the National Assembly of France, which includes communist deputies and is headed by Gaullist former Premier Maurice Couve de Murville.

Ponomarev delivered two major speeches and published an article in the Paris daily *Le Monde*, all putting forward the Soviet Union's policies to prevent war and gain economic and scientific cooperation. The daily *Le Figaro* reported that the French parliamentarians were "stunned" by the power of Ponomarev's call to avoid war and his overwhelming stress on this question. In *Le Monde*, Ponomarev said that the existence of the human race is threatened by the arms race. "It must be understood as clearly as possible," he explained, "that either the arms race will stop the progress of humanity and its very existence, or the peoples will succeed, through collective efforts, in breaking the hellish spiral and thus stop the material preparations for a new world war....Our international policy is based on negotiated settlement of burning problems in the interests of universal peace. If one is to talk about the 'hand of Moscow,' it is our outstretched hand for peace."

Ponomarev's visit concluded with release of a communiqué by the parliamentary delegations, which incorporated the essence of his urgings and stood in stark contrast to the stand of France's delegation — led by President Giscard's associate, Foreign Minister Guiringaud — at the NATO meetings last week, which rejected Soviet disarmament proposals.

Soviet Union On Peace Offensive

Dec. 16 — The following are excerpts from a speech by Boris Ponomarev, a Central Committee Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, before the French Parliament Dec. 10.

...In the struggle to strengthen détente and end the arms race, cooperation between the USSR and France can and must play an important role. We are prepared to develop this in all spheres — political, economic, and in the area of scientific and cultural ties.

...Close cooperation, friendship and accord between the USSR and France, on a lasting and long-term basis, could not only further détente in Europe, but could in practice eliminate the danger of war from the lives of the European peoples. The Soviet Union has been doing all it can so that relations between our two countries develop

precisely in this direction....

Present cooperation between our two countries already embraces a number of fundamental international questions. But, in several respects, in our view, it could be even more constructive. Above all, I have in mind the possibility of joint contribution in the search for resolution of the problem of disarmament.

We would like to see France more actively take part in international efforts directed at ending the arms race, banning nuclear weapons and participating in the work of international forums on the question of disarmament. Unfortunately, we must state that until recently, France's role in this field has been rather passive.

We understand your striving to have an independent national defense and not be obliged to the NATO military bloc.

In our view, efforts to lessen military confrontation on the European continent, to reduce troop strengths and arms in Central Europe — steps on the way to general and complete disarmament — do not contradict this aspiration.

We are taking into consideration the announcement by leading French public figures that France does not intend to return to NATO.

At the same time, we must express concern at every accumulating facts which testify to the strengthening of French cooperation with NATO in military areas.

We are convinced that France could play a significantly more constructive role in questions of military détente and the struggle for disarmament. In our opinion, in this area as well as in other major international questions, the Soviet Union and France could have fruitful cooperation and interaction.

We sincerely consider that the Soviet Union and France — as L.I. Brezhnev noted in his appearance on French television — "have large, common interests, especially in affairs such as the elimination of the threat of war, curbing the arms race and transforming Europe into a continent of lasting peace."

...The Soviet Union on its part is prepared not to interfere into internal affairs, not deviate from these principles and to promote the furthering of efforts to strengthen friendship, mutual assistance and respect. The Soviet government as it has always done, will not tolerate in its own country anti-French propaganda or attacks on the policy of your country and its leadership. But this does not include, of course, our critical evaluation of aspects of French policy.

...We are firmly convinced that between the USSR and France — the two great powers on the European continent — will be harmony, cooperation and friendship, which will create a most important precondition so that there will never be war in Europe.