MEMORANDUM
RM-4359-ISA
JANUARY 1985

SOVIET COMMENTARY ON
THE FRENCH "FORCE DE FRAPPE"
Thomas W. Wolfe

This research is sponsored by the Department of Defense, under Contract SD-79,
monitored by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). Views
or conclusions contained in the Memorandum should not be interpreted as representing
the official opinion or policy of the Department of Defense.

DDC AVAILABILITY NOTICE
Qualified requesters may obtain copies of this report from the Defense Documentation
Center (DDC).
This Memorandum surveys briefly the general trend of Soviet reactions to the French force de frappe (or force de dissuasion), and examines some of the principal themes of the Soviet commentary. The paper is based on research notes compiled by Carol Horning, also of The RAND Corporation, but the author alone, of course, is responsible for the interpretations offered.

The study is a contribution to research on the nuclear capabilities of lesser nuclear powers, undertaken by RAND for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs).

SUMMARY

Within the last few years, the Soviet Union has paid increasing attention to the force de frappe as a development in the over-all French nuclear program, although concern with this subject is still overshadowed in Soviet commentary by the strong opposition to the MLF.

The principal themes in connection with the force de frappe, and their treatment by Soviet commentators, may be summed up as follows:

- The military significance of the French force is consistently belittled, although there has been little professional analysis of its military pros and cons.

- The certainty of reprisal has been stressed in frequent assertions that the use of the nuclear force would bring on retaliation and the destruction of France itself.

- The force de frappe often is presented as essentially an instrument for exerting political, rather than military, pressure both on France's allies and on the Soviet Union. The idea that it could be used successfully to influence Soviet policy is emphatically rejected.

- There are two variations on the theme of the force de frappe as an instrument for political "in-fighting" within the Western alliance. One of these pictures the French nuclear force as having a trigger function designed to ensure fulfillment of the American
commitment to defend Europe. The other portrays it as a device for forcing the United States to abandon the strategy of "flexible response" and return to the "massive retaliation" doctrine.

A substantial part of Soviet commentary on the force de frappe deals with its implications for French-German relations, from accusations of nuclear collusion between Bonn and Paris to suggestions that, ultimately, West Germany will be the chief beneficiary of the French program. There is evident concern among Soviet commentators over the possibility that French nuclear aspirations will somehow play into the hands of the West Germans and facilitate their gaining access to nuclear weapons.

De Gaulle's role and motives with respect to the force de frappe have received rather ambivalent treatment, ranging from praise for his laudable desire to ensure France against German resurgence and American domination, to assertions that his vague and impractical illusions of French grandeur may pave the way to Germany's acquisition of nuclear weapons and thus ultimately embroil France in a disastrous war.

One of the reasons for the comparative restraint of Soviet commentary on the force de frappe, and for the occasional contradictions to be found in it, may be a desire to keep the door open for some sort of Franco-
Soviet understanding as one of several possible lines of Soviet policy toward Europe. Whether this alternative was peculiarly Khrushchev's policy, and how it may be affected by his ouster, remains to be seen.
CONTENTS

PREFACE ................................................................. iii

SUMMARY ................................................................. v

Section

I. INTRODUCTION ...................................................... 1

II. DOWNGRADING THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
    FORCE DE FRAPPE ............................................. 4

III. CERTAINTY OF REPRISAL IF FORCE DE FRAPPE
     WERE USED ..................................................... 7

IV. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE AS A POLITICAL WEAPON
    "AGAINST FRIEND AND FOE" ................................. 11

V. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE AS A LEVER FOR CHANGING
    NATO STRATEGY .............................................. 14

VI. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE IN THE CONTEXT OF A
    "BONN-PARIS AXIS" ........................................ 18

VII. AMBIVALENT TREATMENT OF DE GAULLE'S
     ASPIRATIONS TO A FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE ....... 28
I. INTRODUCTION

The French aspiration to become a nuclear power goes back at least a decade and has been a major subject of international politics since the first French nuclear test in 1960. Yet only in the last two years or so have the Soviets been giving any serious attention to the force de frappe as a discrete development in the over-all French nuclear program.

In general, the Soviet Union has opposed the development of the force de frappe, just as it has opposed the French nuclear test program, but it has done so neither with the single-minded intensity one might expect if it viewed the force itself as a grave threat to Soviet security, nor with a wholly consistent rationale for being against it. Up to the present time, the force de frappe has been the object of much less Soviet attention and criticism than the multilateral force. Concern over the implications of a French nuclear delivery force seems recently to have been largely overshadowed by preoccupation with the notion that the MLF may pave the way for Germany's acquisition of nuclear capabilities. Indeed, much of the Soviet comment on the force de frappe itself has been cast in terms of concern over the possibility that it might ultimately ease German access to nuclear weapons; de Gaulle's own motives for pushing the development of the force de frappe are, by contrast, treated rather ambivalently, with comment ranging from criticism of his "illusions of grandeur" to approval of his independent defiance of the United States.
Among the underlying reasons for the comparative restraint the Soviets generally have shown in commentary on the force de frappe may be their apparent desire to keep the door open for some sort of Franco-Soviet understanding, as one of several alternative lines of Soviet policy toward Europe. (Whether this alternative was peculiarly Khrushchev's policy, and how it may be affected by his deposition, remains to be seen.) The opposition of the French Communists to the force de frappe has similarly tended to be somewhat subdued, perhaps not only owing to the delicate question of de Gaulle's role in the development of Franco-Soviet relations, but also because it would be awkward in the context of internal French politics to portray the French force as something which might provoke a Soviet attack against France. The treatment of the force de frappe by the French Communists, however, has not been systematically surveyed for this Memorandum.

The most common themes in Soviet treatment of the force de frappe are set out in the body of this paper. It should be noted that these themes have appeared in the context of a general Soviet line toward France that emphasizes (1) that France and Russia are natural allies and through their combined efforts could maintain the peace in Europe; (2) that West Germany is taking advantage of the French desire for independence from the United States in order to gain access to nuclear weapons and further her own "revanchist" aims; (3) that Germany will remain a source of trouble until her boundaries are fixed; (4) that in the struggle for markets among the capitalist countries the United States threatens the interests of France in the underdeveloped world, while
in Europe the German industrial potential may eventually gain West Germany an influence greater than that of France; and (5) that the Western alliance is rent by internal antagonisms and conflicting foreign policy goals that will make it impossible to find a satisfactory common strategy.
II. DOWNGRADING THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF
THE FORCE DE FRAPPE

There has been relatively little direct Soviet analysis
of the military pros and cons of the force de frappe, but
what has been said on this subject has clearly been in-
tended to belittle the military significance of the force.
Perhaps the single most authoritative expression of the
Soviet attitude was Khrushchev's comment in an interview
with Harold Wilson and the Labour Party's foreign affairs
specialist Gordon Walker in June 1963, as related in this
press account of Mr. Wilson's version of the talk:

The Premier [Khrushchev] belittled the
value of manned bombers when Mr. Gordon Walker
asked him about the plans of President de Gaulle
to create a French force capable of carrying
nuclear bombs. . . .

"It was clear," Mr. Wilson said, "that whate-
ever Mr. Khrushchev's feelings about France
being a nuclear power, that he did not regard
the French bomber force, or for that matter
the British bomber force, as having any prospect
of getting through the Soviet antiaircraft
defenses." The British Labor leader added:

"He was categorical about this, and [in]
his reference to their antimissile developments
was able to point out that with the very great
progress they have made in that direction it was
ludicrous to suppose that a manned bomber had
any chance of inflicting damage on the Soviet
Union." 1

Lesser Soviet figures, citing the opinions of "Western
experts," have also sought to deprecate the military value
of the force de frappe, and particularly the Mirage-4
aircraft, around which the present force is being built.
In February 1963, a Soviet writer commented:

---
Even if the program is fully realized, the French force de frappe, according to Western military experts, will be quite meager in comparison with the powerful strike forces of the USA or the USSR, and the Mirage-4 atomic bomber will be obsolete even before it becomes operational.2

Later in 1963, a Soviet radio commentator, discussing a speech given in Paris by French General Pierre Gallois, expanded further on the vulnerability of the Mirage-4 to Soviet air defenses. He said:

General Gallois has praised the Mirage-4, which can carry atomic bombs and which would penetrate into USSR territory and strike definite targets. However, many French military experts and others doubt this possibility very seriously. They believe that the Soviet antiaircraft defense has sufficient capability to shoot these planes down, regardless of the altitude at which they fly. The range of action of the Mirage-4 is rather small, and refueling is expected to be done in the air with tanker aircraft bought in the United States. We can easily imagine how vulnerable these means of attack are, and there is no doubt that the destruction of these planes would be followed by reprisals from tremendously superior forces.3

In addition to deprecating the air-delivery capabilities of a French force built around the Mirage-4, Soviet commentary has sometimes asserted in a more general sense that the French atomic forces will be too modest in character ever to be "in a position to change the balance

---
3 Soviet broadcast in French to Europe, December 11, 1963.
of power in the world."⁴ While some Soviet spokesmen have taken note of French interest in ultimately adding to the force de frappe "second-generation" delivery systems in the form of missile-launching nuclear submarines and land-based missiles,⁵ there has been a notable absence of professional military commentary on the direct military implications of such developments.

III. CERTAINTY OF REPRISAL IF FORCE DE FRAPPE WERE USED

The depreciation of the military value of the force de frappe has been reinforced in Soviet commentary by frequent assertions, as in the example quoted above, that its use would bring retaliation and the destruction of France itself. One Soviet writer, in commenting on de Gaulle's memorable press conference of January 14, 1963, pointed out that not only was France's desire for an independent nuclear force "unrealistic and dangerous" but France could not employ her nuclear weapons without herself "being destroyed." In February 1963, Soviet defense minister Marshal Malinovskii spoke of the danger of German revanchism seeking to realize its aims "through multilateral NATO nuclear forces" or "a new 'Bonn-Paris axis'" and pointedly stressed that, if war were forced on the Soviet Union, the "entire all-destroying might" of the Soviet armed forces would be turned against the "imperialists." And a few months ago, an article in Red Star discussed the advocacy by French General Charles Ailleret of a strategy of "immediate massive retaliation"; calling it a strategy of "immediate suicide," the writer warned:

Ailleret has clearly forgotten the actual balance of forces in the world today and the fate in store for France herself if the French

---


atom-mongers succeed in drawing her into a war against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.\footnote{8}

Soviet comment on this subject generally has singled out France as the country in danger of reprisal if the force de frappe is employed. Sometimes the Bonn-Paris "partnership" and the whole of NATO are included among the objects of Soviet retaliation. For example, Marshal A. Eremenko, suggesting that the European members of NATO should not expect a retaliatory blow to be struck merely at the United States in the event of aggression by a European country, said in May 1963: "No matter which of the participants in the Atlantic bloc sows the wind, it is the whole bloc that will reap the whirlwind."\footnote{9} This sort of general warning that the Soviet Union would not discriminate among members of NATO if one of them were to attack the Soviet bloc has been a fairly common feature of Soviet commentary, but at the same time there has been a notable avoidance of specific threats to the effect that the Soviet Union would retaliate automatically against U.S. territory if the French attacked alone. In fact, there have been occasional suggestions from the Soviet side, discussed elsewhere by this writer, that only if the United States were "itself to carry out . . . an attack" against a Soviet bloc member would the Soviet Union be impelled to deliver a retaliatory blow at the United

\footnote{8}{Article by Observer, "The Theory of 'Immediate Suicide.'" Red Star, August 1, 1964.}
\footnote{9}{TASS report, May 31, 1963.}
States. This hint of an endeavor to avoid the automatic escalation of possible third-power conflicts in Europe may have been limited to a situation involving the two German states, but it would also seem applicable in some circumstances arising out of an individual initiative by the French force de frappe.

In general, the Soviets have not given much attention to the operational concepts of the force de frappe and to targeting plans for it. The assumption seems to be that the force would attack Soviet cities, and the statements of various French figures, including General Ailleret, Defense Minister Pierre Messmer, and de Gaulle himself, occasionally have been cited to the effect that the French force might be capable of killing as many as "40 million people." One Soviet writer has quoted Messmer as saying: "France will have such a limited nuclear capability that there is no point in aiming at anything but Moscow or other Soviet cities." A later comment on Messmer and his views quoted him more fully, including his statement that "It would be absurd [for France] to expect to destroy the enemy's nuclear weapons delivery vehicles."

---

10 See the present author's comment on this question in "Shifts in Soviet Strategic Thought," Foreign Affairs, April 1964, p. 482.


While Soviet commentators seek to convey the point that France would be inviting suicide if she employed the force de frappe against the Soviet bloc, there is little to suggest that the Soviet Union regards the likelihood of an actual French attack as high. Occasionally, the French program for "building up nuclear armaments" has been mentioned in a general way as a factor which "greatly increases the danger of an aggressive war, of a surprise attack which would lead to a worldwide nuclear catastrophe." 14 One Soviet spokesman has said that even states "with limited nuclear stocks could inflict substantial damage on a stronger neighbor," adding that "this would be suicide, but such acts are not unknown." 15 In general, the Soviets do not accuse the French of a proclivity toward starting a war (unless they are being manipulated by Bonn -- a theme to be discussed later). On the contrary, a major Soviet contention has been that the political, rather than the military, utility of the force de frappe is uppermost in de Gaulle's mind.

IV. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE AS A POLITICAL WEAPON
"AGAINST FRIEND AND FOE"

The theme that the French nuclear force represents essentially a political tool has appeared in Soviet commentary in a number of variations. One frequently repeated version is that France looks upon the force de frappe as a means of compensating for her relative weakness, and of bringing political pressure -- sometimes described as "blackmail" -- to bear upon both her allies and the Soviet Union. As put in an article in International Affairs by the Moscow correspondent of L'Humanité,

Because France is relatively weaker than her rivals, French imperialism endeavors to possess certain means of political pressure over its competitors. Like the toad puffing itself up, the French imperialists, particularly through the creation of their own "atomic striking force," aspire at having France recognized as a force to be reckoned with among the imperialist powers, if only in Western Europe. In this way, the atom bomb in de Gaulle's scheme of things is not merely a weapon in the arsenal directed against the Soviet Union, but also a lever of blackmail in relations with the allies."16 [Italics in original.]

At times, Soviet commentary puts the greater emphasis on the use of nuclear weapons for political ends within the Western alliance, where they are said to be an instrument in the "in-fighting for supremacy and political

influence."  At other times, the stress is on French hopes of influencing Soviet policy, or, alternatively, on the expectations of the French that nuclear weapons will "help them implement their neocolonialist policy in respect of the less developed countries." While the Soviets have shown little tendency to assess the success of the French in "in-fighting" with such Western rivals as the United States, they have emphatically asserted that attempts to use the force de frappe "to exert any kind of influence on the policy of the USSR rely either on groundless illusions or on the will to deceive French public opinion." Or, as another commentator puts it,

France wants to have its own hand on the trigger because it would then be in a position to negotiate with the Soviet Union and the United States. This is a dangerous illusion. Atomic blackmail will never impress the Soviet Union.

17 L. Vidysova, "Dispute Simmers Between USA and France," International Affairs, No. 12, December 1963, pp. 23, 25. See also V. Sedykh, "Increase Foundation for Grandeur," ibid., No. 4, April 1963, p. 13, where Sedykh states: "De Gaulle would like to have his 'own' atomic forces in the NATO context in order to preserve an 'independent' policy with regard to his partners, first and foremost, the United States."


19 Soviet broadcast in French to Europe, December 11, 1963.

Although Soviet spokesmen reject the notion that French nuclear pressure against the Soviet Union might pay off, they display a certain uneasiness at the thought that attempts at political exploitation of the force de frappe may lead to trouble. Thus, one commentator, speaking of the French "desire to exploit the contradictions among the leading powers of the world," called it "harmful and dangerous for the country's future."\textsuperscript{21} Another writer, referring to a discussion by Jules Moch of "nuclear blackmail by France," described many leaders in the West as agreeing with Moch's conclusion that "the French nuclear force would be ineffective militarily and dangerous politically."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21}Nekrasov, Pravda, January 19, 1963.
\textsuperscript{22}Beknazar-Yuzbashev, International Affairs, November 1963, p. 37.
V. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE AS A LEVER FOR CHANGING NATO STRATEGY

Another variation on the theme of the political implications of the force de frappe has been set in the context of disagreement within the Western alliance over future NATO strategy. While most Soviet commentary on NATO's strategic problems does not center on France and the force de frappe alone, some of it describes French aspirations for an independent strategic force as a symptom of "a nuclear arms race within NATO" in which France is said to be laying down a challenge to U.S. hegemony. 23 As one Soviet writer expressed it in somewhat general terms,

Each of the big imperialist powers belonging to NATO tries to offer a strategy for the bloc as a whole, which above all would be to its own advantage, and would allow it to use the alliance and its armed forces and strategy for its own ends. However, to dictate NATO strategy the country must have definite influence in the bloc and in world affairs, which in the imperialist camp is determined by military strength, and nuclear strength first and foremost. That is why the biggest members of the bloc, like Britain and France, want to build up nuclear forces of their own, independent of the United States. For the same reason, West Germany too wants to get nuclear arms. 24


The more specific elaboration on this theme in Soviet commentary tends to be in one of two directions. The first of these plays on European doubts concerning the firmness of the American nuclear commitment to defend Europe, and pictures the French nuclear force as having primarily a trigger function with regard to the United States. France embarked upon the *force de frappe*, according to a typical statement of this theme, because of fear that the United States may not come to the aid of Western Europe if "conflict breaks out on the European continent." By building up their nuclear potential, the French (in some versions with the encouragement of the Germans, in others so as to keep nuclear weapons out of German hands) "assume they can influence U.S. policy, impose certain decisions and, at a pinch, confront the United States with the threat of being drawn into a thermonuclear war."26

The second direction of Soviet commentary on the significance of the *force de frappe* in terms of policy differences over NATO strategy involves a certain restrained approval for the U.S. position. This line of comment pictures the French nuclear force essentially as a device for forcing the United States to abandon the strategy of "flexible response," which "assumes that a war in Europe may initially be conducted with conventional

---

25 "Nuclear Weapons and the West," account of a symposium in August 1964 arranged by the Soviet journal *International Affairs*, in *International Affairs*, No. 9, September 1964, p. 55. Elsewhere in the same account (p. 57), West Germany is said to attach more importance to Atlantic partnership than France, but both are said to be worried that the United States won't defend them.

26 Ibid., p. 55.
weapons," and instead "to accept a strategy under which any attack on Europe would be countered with nuclear weapons."\(^\text{27}\) France, according to this Soviet account, is among the NATO countries (Britain is named as another) which "prefer NATO to adhere to the 'massive retaliation' strategy."\(^\text{28}\)

While not actually endorsing the U.S. desire "to substitute a more flexible doctrine for massive retaliation," some Soviet commentators lean part way in this direction by observing that the United States has shown "much greater understanding" of the risks embodied in the old strategy than have West Germany and France, who, as of early 1964, seem to have "intensified their campaign for 'massive retaliation.'"\(^\text{29}\)

Another aspect of Soviet discussion of NATO's strategic turmoil centers around allegations that West Germany, "which has comparatively little territory and is situated on the front line of the border with the socialist countries," is counting on a "forward strategy" to escape destruction in any future war.\(^\text{30}\) This strategy is said to be merely a more palatable name for "massive retaliation," and to be intended likewise to lure the Americans away from a strategy of "flexible response."\(^\text{31}\) In this conception.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 58. See also Slobodenko, \textit{ibid.}, June 1964, p. 41; F. Fyodorov, "NATO and the Demand of the Times," \textit{ibid.}, No. 2, February 1964, pp. 40-41.

\(^{28}\) Slobodenko, \textit{ibid.}, June 1964, p. 41.

\(^{29}\) Fyodorov, \textit{ibid.}, February 1964, p. 41.


the role of France would be to serve as "the strategic rear" for a West Germany bent on attacking her neighbors to the East. 32

VI. THE FORCE DE FRAPPE IN THE CONTEXT OF A "BONN-PARIS AXIS"

A substantial portion of Soviet commentary on the force de frappe has been concerned in one way or another with its implications for French-German relations, ranging from accusations of collusion between Bonn and Paris in nuclear matters to suggestions that in the long run West Germany will prove to be the chief beneficiary of the force de frappe program. While there have been some obvious inconsistencies, Soviet commentary on this subject has been consistent in one respect: it has displayed an evident concern, both implicit and explicit, that French nuclear aspirations will somehow play into the hands of the West Germans and facilitate their access to nuclear weapons.

Prominent among the several themes in this context pursued by Soviet commentators is the assertion that France and Germany have collaborated closely in nuclear matters and other military planning in accord with a Bonn-Paris axis aimed at the USSR (or, alternatively, at the United States). This theme was most pronounced in the period between the signing of the French-West German treaty of cooperation in January 1963 and the cooling in Franco-German relations which followed Adenauer's retirement in October 1963, but it still continues to be heard. Even before the French-German accord of January 22, 1963, was formalized, Soviet commentators voiced suspicions that "French ruling circles" were counting on German cooperation to further French ambitions in Europe "in repayment" for French support to Bonn "on military and
political questions." The charge was raised that such support might include the sharing of nuclear weapons with Germany.

Following the mutual exchange of visits by Adenauer and de Gaulle in July and September 1962, Soviet commentators noted among other things that French-German conversations devoted great attention to matters of military cooperation, including "the question of joint production by France and the FRG of nuclear weapons." An official Soviet government statement in September 1962 charged that the joint communiqué of September 7 on de Gaulle's visit "left no doubt about the existence of collusion aimed at exacerbating the international situation and intensifying the arms race." Further, the statement asserted, de Gaulle's visit "contributed in no small way to strengthening military cooperation between France and West Germany." It then went on to say:

One cannot rule out the possibility that such "organic cooperation" of the armed forces of France and the FRG could be used by the West German military for producing all types of weapons, jointly with France, and for supplying the Bundeswehr with them.

Soviet commentary in this period included occasional allegations that the United States was helping both France

33See V. Shatrov, "France after Evian," Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn, No. 6, June 1962, p. 36.
and Germany to build up nuclear forces aimed at the USSR, although this theme was somewhat at odds with other statements, which took the line that France's desire for "nuclear independence" was "not for defense against a "Soviet menace" but reflected rather a "longing for equality with the USA" and "a latent but very serious fear that nuclear weapons might emerge in the hands of Bonn, with all the concomitant dangerous consequences." The suggestion that fear of German nuclear acquisition may discourage the French from nuclear sharing with Bonn was to reappear later, but during most of 1963 it was drowned out by insistent allegations of a Bonn-Paris conspiracy in which both sides were said to be pursuing close military collaboration "of unprecedented scope and character." A typical statement in May 1963 went as follows:

Today Paris and Bonn are working out and coordinating their military doctrines, organizing the joint production of weapons, and hastily conducting military preparations aimed primarily against the USSR, former ally of France in the struggle against Hitlerism. The nuclear forces which France is creating are regarded in Paris

36 Moscow radio broadcast to Europe, October 5, 1962.
38 "The Bonn-Paris Axis -- Conspiracy Against Peace." Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn. March 1963, p. 67. See also Soviet government note of February 5, 1963, protesting against the treaty of January 22, 1963, and stating that French and West German military doctrine now appeared to have a common denominator, since they were to have a united military force. Pravda, February 8, 1963.
as the most reliable basis of the French-West German military alliance.\textsuperscript{39}

In 1964, although Soviet commentary by then had come to recognize with some satisfaction that French-German relations were wearing thin in spots, the alliance was still treated as an arrangement under which nuclear collaboration was going forward. Thus, a Soviet commentator asserted in July 1964 that German specialists were still continuing to work in French nuclear research institutes "gathering knowledge which is needed by West German weapons manufacturers to make the cheap German atomic bomb of which they dream."\textsuperscript{40} Another Soviet writer, claiming that Western monopolies were in "connivance" to prepare the way for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and missiles in West Germany, singled out "Franco-West German military cooperation in the atomic sphere" as a factor still significant in this regard. Subsequent events have confirmed, he said, that the provisions of the January 1963 Bonn-Paris accord included "secret clauses that ... call for cooperation in the manufacture of nuclear weapons."\textsuperscript{41}

Closely related to the theme of nuclear collusion between Bonn and Paris has been the repeated suggestion that, in attempting to strengthen their own position by


\textsuperscript{40}Moscow radio broadcast to Europe, July 24, 1964.

\textsuperscript{41}N. Yuryev, "The Atomic-Missile Rush in West Germany," \textit{International Affairs}, No. 4, April 1964, p. 43.
collaborating with Bonn, the French have merely served the interests of Germany and opened the door to her acquisition of nuclear weapons. De Gaulle, according to Soviet commentary, was led to court German cooperation in building up his "own" atomic forces because France did "not possess sufficient economic and technical resources for this." \(^{42}\) Some Soviet sources credit de Gaulle with having initially intended to arrange matters in such a way that he could obtain German help while at the same time retaining the "nuclear baton" in his own hands; the French leader is said to have sought "to organize a division of labor in which West Germany would undertake high cost projects for manufacturing delivery vehicles while France would keep control of the nuclear warheads in the same way as the United States is doing at the present time." \(^{43}\)

However, this attempt to secure for France atomic forces which "the French monopolists" did not have the means to pay for was labeled a "dangerous game." \(^{44}\) The price to the French was a "Franco-West German treaty which gives Bonn the long-term possibility of getting hold of nuclear weapons by other means." \(^{45}\) By paying this price, which amounts to giving "military encouragement to the Bonn revanchists," de Gaulle "hoped to buy from them the


\(^{43}\) Shaposhnichenko, "Peaceful Settlement or Suicidal 'Deterrence,'" *ibid.*, No. 10, October 1963, p. 24.

\(^{44}\) Fedulaev, *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 17, September 1963, pp. 84-85.

political and economic concessions he needs to strengthen his own position, and above all, to realize his own ambitious dream of a European 'third force' obedient to his baton. 46 What de Gaulle failed to realize, according to Soviet commentary, was that, having obtained "military indulgence from Paris, the Rhine militarists" would soon be "thumbing their noses at him in reply." 47 A Soviet note to the French government in May 1963 put it as follows:

The French government apparently refuses to realize that, in pursuing a course toward the creation of so-called independent French nuclear forces, it is pointing out for West Germany, as it were, the shortest path to nuclear weapons. True, today, the West German militarists do not yet dare to say openly what service the French example may render them. But they are already placing on the agenda the slogan of "equality in armaments," which Hitler employed to break the peace treaty of Versailles. 48

This line of argument -- that the French have been taken in by their "fictitious marriage" with Bonn, which may "sue for divorce" whenever it seems advantageous 49 -- has occasionally been supplemented by the assertion that the United States too has been the victim of Bonn's advances to France. Thus, a Bastille Day article in Izvestiia in 1964 contained this statement:

---

47 Ibid.
The Bonn politicians are using their flirtation with France to blackmail the USA, with the object of acquiring their own uncontrolled access to nuclear weapons.50

In addition to arguing that French collusion with Bonn, designed to serve de Gaulle's nuclear pretensions, has only played into West Germany's hands, Soviet commentators also have dwelt somewhat ominously upon what the dangerous consequences of this "misguided policy" may be. Variations on this theme are numerous, but the main note is that France will find herself increasingly dependent on the FRC, whose "revanchist aims" are "fraught with dangerous consequences" that could turn "into an atomic mushroom over France."51

In the fall of 1962, when French-German cooperation seemed to be waxing strong in the wake of de Gaulle's visit to Germany, the Soviet government expressed the conviction -- or perhaps at the time, merely the hopeful expectation -- that Paris would one day come to rue her efforts at rapprochement with France's traditional foe:

The French ruling circles in agreeing to the "Bonn-Paris axis," entertain the secret hope that they will succeed in taking over the leading place in this militaristic association, and, basing themselves on West Germany, will gain for France a leadership role among the capitalist countries of Europe. However, the groundlessness

51 Moscow radio commentary by Victor Orlov, July 19, 1964; Izvestiia, February 16, 1963. See also Beknazar-Yuzbashhev, International Affairs, November 1963, p. 37, warning that "a world conflict could begin with France's being wiped off the face of the earth."
of such hopes is obvious. The rule of the strongest prevails in relations between imperialist states, and he who has the greater military and economic potential seizes the upper hand. Thus, no matter what the plans of the French politicians may be, their fate in the "Bonn-Paris axis" is to trail behind their stronger predatory West German partner and to be on the leash of the revanchists on the banks of the Rhine.\textsuperscript{52}

More recent Soviet commentary continues to argue that French policy and diplomatic aims are "based on hopelessly obsolete military and political dogmas," and that these play into the hands of the "West German militarists."\textsuperscript{53} who "take no pains to conceal the fact that they expect to gain their demands by unleashing a thermonuclear war in which France and other West European countries would inevitably become embroiled.\textsuperscript{54} The relative weakness and military inability of France to ward off the danger to which her association with German "revanchist aims" exposes her also figure in Soviet warnings:

It is a secret to no one that, in view of the military technology of our times, the French atomic forces will never be in a position to change the balance of power in the world. If the holocaust of war should ever erupt, it would scorch all of France with a lethal flame and would place the national future of the French people in doubt.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52}Soviet Government statement by TASS, Pravda. September 19, 1962.

\textsuperscript{53}Nekrasov, Pravda, January 19, 1963.

\textsuperscript{54}Sedykh, International Affairs, April 1963, p. 12.

The earlier Soviet predictions that France would "increasingly support Bonn's revanchist policy" was tempered somewhat by later evidence that French-German relations were turning sour. The danger to France of being embroiled in a war because of her association with Bonn has continued to be an element of Soviet commentary, but the additional note that has appeared concerns de Gaulle's growing disillusionment with the Bonn-Paris axis, which has led to doubts as to whether he "will want to share" with West Germany the French nuclear weapons that "are only now beginning to come off the assembly line."57

This suggestion that de Gaulle has begun to see the light and to appreciate that "the Franco-German treaty turned out to be a blunder" has been accompanied by a major shift of Soviet attention from Bonn-Paris nuclear collaboration to the MLF as the most likely route to the acquisition of nuclear weapons in Germany.59 While it is still held that "the efforts to build a French force de frappe and the MLF project are both evidence of a growing

57 N. Matveyev, "Western Europe: Asset or Liability in the Struggle for Peace?" *International Affairs*, No. 1, January 1964, p. 54.
59 It should be noted that, prior to U.S. efforts of late 1963 and early 1964 to promote the project of an MLF surface fleet, the earlier idea of an MLF submarine fleet or other variants of a NATO nuclear force had received strong opposition in Soviet commentary. See, for example, Fedulaev, *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 17, September 1963, pp. 80-85.
threat to peace and security in Europe," the MLF project has evidently displaced the Bonn-Paris arrangement in Soviet eyes as the more immediate and threatening avenue of West German nuclear access. In either case, however, Soviet commentary has not departed from its recurrent emphasis that a prime object of Soviet policy is to prevent nuclear weapons from becoming available to West Germany, irrespective of how this might come about. This was expressed as follows in a Soviet government note of February 5, 1963:

No matter how nuclear weapons fall into the hands of the Bundeswehr, directly or indirectly, the Soviet Union would regard this as an immediate threat to its vital national interests and would be obliged to take the necessary measures dictated by the circumstances.61

Precisely what measures the Soviet Union would feel obliged to take has not been spelled out. The customary formula, given expression in the Soviet note of July 11, 1964, to the seven participants in the USS Biddle "mixed crew" experiment, merely warns that, should Bonn gain access to nuclear weapons through the MLF, "it is obvious that with such a development of events, the Soviet Union, together with other peace-loving countries, would be obliged to take appropriate measures dictated by the new situation and to duly safeguard their security.62

60 Matveyev, International Affairs, January 1964, p. 54.
VII. AMBIVALENT TREATMENT OF DE GAULLE'S ASPIRATIONS TO A FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE

In addition to the several major themes discussed above, the rather ambivalent Soviet treatment of de Gaulle's role with respect to the force de frappe has been noticeable throughout the past few years. Since the time of Khrushchev's visit to France in March 1960, which was hailed as the beginning of a new era in Soviet-French relations, and was the occasion of Khrushchev's remark that "the path to peace in Europe lies in alliance and friendship between the Soviet Union and France," de Gaulle has been treated as a figure who -- while having certain "wicked propensities," "bad habits," and "illusions of grandeur" -- nevertheless is not necessarily beyond redemption, and who at bottom does not really believe in a Soviet threat but is merely using it in an attempt to unite Europe and France.

At times de Gaulle's aspiration to build the force de frappe has been attributed to his vague and impractical "grand illusions"; at other times to his shrewd effort to free France from the domination of United States policy; and at still other times to the promptings of "French monopolists," pictured as "greedy for profits" and the "real promoters" of the force de frappe. This

---

65 See Colonel V. Konoplev, "Scientific Prediction in Military Affairs," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 24,
Ambivalent presentation of de Gaulle and his motives has been further clouded by suggestions that he is being moved by a laudable desire to insure France against the resurgence of Germany, but also that he has foolishly allowed himself to be led by the nose by "revanchists" in Bonn.

This welter of allegations makes it difficult to say whether the net Soviet assessment of de Gaulle's own ambitions with regard to the force de frappe comes out negative or positive. One may suppose, however, that the Soviet attitude will tend to fluctuate, as it has seemed to do over the past few years, depending on whether de Gaulle's policy at a given juncture embarrasses his Western partners more than it threatens the interests of the Soviet Union.