

'Comments in the French press' from Le Monde (31 August 1954)

Caption: On the eve of the debates in the French National Assembly, the French press displays its scepticism regarding the European Defence Community's chances of success.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. BEUVE-MÉRY, Hubert. 30.08.1954, n° 2 985. Paris: Le Monde. "Les commentaires de la presse française".

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Comments in the French press

Combat : the godsend.

‘It is unnecessary, we know, to give the National Assembly an excuse to procrastinate. It is naturally inclined to do so, thanks to a system which has made time-wasting manoeuvres and compromise into its procedural rules and, perhaps, the conditions for its survival.

What a godsend to be able to avoid choosing between refusal and acceptance of the EDC, those chronic waverers must have thought, whose greatest fear is to have to make a decision ...

On this issue, Mr Mendès France, undoubtedly against his will, could not hold the same line of conduct as he did for Indo-China, Tunisia or the special powers.

We trust that he will not live to regret it.’

(Jean Fabiani)

Le Parisien Libéré : deadlock.

‘It seems clear that, while there is no majority in the Palais-Bourbon in favour of an integrated European army, neither is there one for authorising a new Wehrmacht. The choice, as Mr Mendès France emphasised, is not so simple. There must be something in between. But, given that the Communists and half of the Socialists will oppose any German rearmament, it will be difficult to find a majority from which the more “European” Members of Parliament will tend to keep their distance.

It will then be deadlock, a deadlock bringing foreseeable risks and dangers, ranging from the neutrality of France to the overthrow of our alliances.’

(Paul Le Gall)

Libération : condemned ...

‘The EDC is condemned, dead!

In vain do its advocates, as they feel the ground slipping from under them, try, by desperate and dishonourable means (dishonourable for all those using them), to save the principle of the EDC in the hope of being able to revive their evil campaign, which has failed once.

Too late.

France will not allow it.

Any majority, any government which attempted to patch up the EDC, rejected by the country with a vehemence and anger that grows from hour to hour, would itself be defeated.’

(Michel Fourrier)

Franc-Tireur : undermining the vote.

‘The truth is that, at no time in his lengthy speech, did the Prime Minister show any desire to reopen negotiations on the EDC. He now envisages renegotiating only on the basis of complete rejection of the

Treaty with or without Protocol.

However, in not saying so directly, in not declaring himself more clearly against it and in not dealing with the question of confidence, he is helping to undermine the vote.

Mr Mendès France knows, however, that all the votes that are going to take place are already undermined by the very fact that his compromise in Brussels, as well as the original EDC, unites against him the Communists, whose votes he cannot ignore this time, the opponents of any form of German rearmament, the Koenig-tendency Gaullists and the nationalists who, as one of their spokesmen, Mr Pierre André, said yesterday, feel that “the EDC is worse than the Wehrmacht.”

(Charles Ronsac)

L’Aurore : fatal abandonment ...

‘However painful we find this controversy, it is beyond doubt that, if the EDC is rejected, the Parliament and the French Government cannot be satisfied with having wiped the slate clean. They must not give up, and their task will be to build another system of defence for Europe.

If not, if, perchance, they are unable to offer a valid alternative, how will they prevent our partners from interpreting this inability, this weakness as being an abandonment fatal to our national interests.’

(Robert Bony)

L’Humanité : there will be other attempts ...

‘Various adjournment motions have been made since Saturday by the lackeys serving Antoine Pinay, Robert Schuman, Paul Reynaud, René Mayer and Guy Mollet. Yesterday evening, those notions were “blended” into one which called on the Government to postpone the debate until 21 September so that it might resume negotiations with the “Five” ...

But the opponents of the EDC united against this threat. They secured approval that the debate continue.

Other attempts will undoubtedly be made to stop the Assembly from taking a decision. The greatest care must be taken to deflect them.’

(George Bouvard)

Le Figaro : loyalty ...

‘Yesterday, Mr Mendès France pronounced an indictment against the EDC which was so skilful, firm and considered in tone, so virulent in its attack and of such style in general that it would have been worthy of the highest court in the land. The most serious weakness of this indictment, a major and remarkable weakness, was that it was not intended as such.

Mr Mendès France made a speech which was constantly accusatory, but never openly so. Can one imagine a Public Prosecutor who, in the name of neutrality, sat on the fence in such a way?

Loyalty, as Mr Paul Reynaud pointed out so well, is no longer, in a case like this, a matter of leaving to the Assembly the responsibility for making a “choice” but of making a choice oneself and of expressing it so unequivocally.’

[...]