

## 'The two scenarios' from Le Figaro (15 December 1953)

**Caption:** On 15 December 1953, in connection with the debates on the European Defence Community (EDC), François Mauriac, a member of the French Academy, writes an article for the French daily newspaper Le Figaro in which he emphasises the importance of France's role on the international stage.

**Source:** Le Figaro. dir. de publ. BRISSON, Pierre. 15.12.1953, n° 2 882; 126e année. Paris: Le Figaro. "Les deux tableaux", auteur:Mauriac, François , p. 1.

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## The two scenarios

by François Mauriac

'You make light of problems you don't understand very well.' This reproach is often made to me by the same people who are scandalised by the fact that I do not join in certain arguments. 'Why do you keep quiet about the European Defence Community? Are you afraid to face up to your responsibilities?' But sometimes I hardly like to intervene because I am, myself, ambivalent. Today I will set out the reasons for my uncertainty: this will be a document amongst many others to help foreigners understand the hesitations of the French people, caught as they are in a tragic dilemma. I feel, I must admit, the strength of the arguments on both sides, and if I happen to lean sometimes towards the opponents of ratification, I am not sure that it is not more through emotion rather than reason. I believe that we have equal chances of winning or losing under either scenario, depending on whether or not we are able to re-establish the power of the State. The more I think about it, the more I fear that all is lost, whichever side we take, if we do not reform the State; but a strong France will remain in charge of its destiny, should it choose to ratify the Treaty of Paris or should it say no to the idea of a European army.

A France which is strong enough to follow its own policy particularly with regard to Russia and Poland from within the European Defence Community, in spite of the inroads on its sovereignty, a nation that has become an effective intermediary between the opposing empires would reduce the risks of conflict which, on the other hand, appear very likely if a rearmed Germany dominates Western Europe. For faced with a new Reichswehr, were it European, Russia would only reinforce its hold on East Germany and make even more violent the desire for reunification, which the Germans must undoubtedly feel. In truth, how can we blame them, when after forty-four years we were not yet resigned to the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. No doubt a strong France, from within the European Community, would avert this danger of war: its desire for peace would counterbalance the striving for unity which we fear, in the years to come, will mobilise the dreaded qualities of the German race. In the Europe of today, if we remain as we are, weak and subservient to the powerful allies who sustain us, at some point I fear that the French people will be dragged into what seems to some experienced observers, a historical necessity: war for the reunification of Germany.

It remains to be said, (and it is here that I have trouble siding with the opponents of the European army) that a France, more or less at odds with the United States despite the Atlantic Alliance would be thrown into the Russian camp. I cannot see how, in the permanent state of crisis in which France operates, it could avoid being dominated and manipulated under much worse circumstances than those it was subjected to under Anglo-Saxon influence, ignoring the fact that Germany would be no less likely to rearm. In my opinion, the strongest argument in favour of the European Defence Community is that expressed recently by André François-Poncet. 'Would a refusal on our part to ratify the integrated army proposal stop German rearmament? Certainly not. It would only be faster and of greater scale. It will come about under the aegis of the Atlantic Alliance, or if we veto the entry of Germany into the Alliance, as we have the right to do, it will happen outside it. (This answers General Weygand's contention: The Atlantic Alliance is enough. ) Make no mistake, between Washington and Bonn relations are already close, understanding already strong.'

We must not dwell on this or retreat into bitterness, but we must change our political habits. Whichever side they lean towards, the French must, on the eve of a presidential election, unite and agree to reform the State. This is the good side of the whole debate over the European army: the differences between Left and Right have been abolished: national interest alone is the key to opposing views and leads to unexpected alliances. Advocates and opponents must therefore draw the same conclusions. Never before has foreign policy been so dependent on internal reform. Restore the State at home and the choices we make abroad will not, if the worst comes to the worst, ever be fatal.

François Mauriac,  
Of the Académie Française

PS - After this article was written, I learned of Mr Foster Dulles' declarations: these seriously alter the fundamentals at stake.

