

## 'To reject Euratom is to make France more dependent' from Le Monde (4 July 1956)

**Caption:** On 4 July 1956, the French daily newspaper Le Monde publishes an interview with Maurice Faure, Junior Minister in the French Foreign Ministry and Head of the French Delegation to the Intergovernmental Conference on the Common Market and Euratom, who highlights the civilian and military advantages for France of participation in the future European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom).

**Source:** Le Monde. dir. de publ. BEUVE-MÉRY, Hubert. 04.07.1956, n° 3 560; 13e année. Paris: Le Monde. "Refuser l'Euratom c'est accroître la dépendance de la France nous déclare M.Maurice Faure secrétaire d'État aux Affaires étrangères", p. 1; 3.

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## To reject Euratom is to make France more dependent

declares Maurice Faure

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

**The French Parliament will begin the discussion on Euratom next Thursday. Before knowing all the facts, some people have already come down ‘for’ or ‘against’. This haste results largely from memories of recent events. In a matter that is so important for the future of France, is it always necessary to look to the past? References to the EDC may well completely obscure the reality of the project that Parliament is about to debate.**

**This new type of parliamentary scrutiny must be approached not only with an open mind but also with some precise knowledge of the scientific, political and economic data involved. We asked Maurice Faure, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who recently represented France at conferences in Venice and Brussels, to reply to a series of questions on the theme: why Euratom? How may France benefit from such an organisation?**

*‘Some people fear that Euratom will compromise France’s independence. What is your opinion, Minister?’*

— If Euratom is not set up, we shall have to buy the nuclear fuel required for the development of our atomic industry directly from the United States, or from the International Atomic Agency when it is created. As from 1958, France itself will produce too little. When buying from outside, be it the United States or the UN, we shall be subject to very strict controls and to total dependence on the powerful organisation that sells this fissile material. Euratom will also exert some control. It is natural for the Community to protect itself against its members misusing the enriched uranium that they have bought. However, this control will be exercised by a Community to which France will belong and which it will have helped to organise. With Euratom, there will no longer be two sides, the ‘controllers’ (the US and the USSR) and the ‘controlled’, but a mutual control among partners.

France could avoid all control only if it was able to complete, alone, the full cycle of the atomic process, from the extraction of the first kilo of the mineral to the production of the first kilowatt-hour of electricity. In other words, we would have to own uranium processing plants, a vast factory for the separation of isotopes and a number of different types of powerful reactors capable of meeting our civilian and military needs.

If we put devoted ourselves entirely to this task, we would probably succeed. However, what is beyond our capabilities is to follow a course of rapid atomic industrialisation, a daring housing policy and the rehabilitation of the Sahara, to further the economic progress of the French Union once the Algerian conflict is settled and to raise the standard of living at home, etc. To believe the contrary is to show a lack of intellectual honesty, is it not? To refuse Euratom in the name of national independence would lead to a situation where France would be even more dependent.

— *Does not sharing our atomic know-how provide Germany with an unwarranted gift?*

— If we do not create Euratom, Germany will catch up with us very fast and will subsequently overtake us. We shall then probably wish that we had embraced the Community system we could have had, with its web of solidarity which enables Western Europe to be independent and prosperous. Each member makes a different contribution to begin with, but the individual ‘contributions’ will be worth so much more later on that it will be absurd to try and judge who has benefited most from the project.

— *Will the plutonium made in Marcoule form part of the pool?*

— No, the country of origin will use the fissile materials produced within its own national programme. The plutonium from Marcoule is, in theory, destined for the EDF. In four years, it may, perhaps, be used for national defence purposes, and Euratom will not alter that.

*Given assurances on these matters, how will France actually benefit from joining Euratom?*

— There are two principal benefits. They are quite sufficient to confound any doubts: accessibility to all research and patents and the advantage of a large market. The productivity of an energy source such as coal can no longer be much increased by research. On the other hand, research is still the most important ‘department’ of the nuclear industry. I am sure that a certain amount of overlap between scientists is needed, but duplication of effort must be avoided. Euratom will not prevent anyone from undertaking a particular research project; however, since the ‘European Commission’ will be kept informed of such programmes, it will be able to advise, orientate or dissuade a country from going along an avenue that has already been explored, with or without success, by another country. To give you an example: manufacturing a prototype of each kind of reactor costs 15 000 million francs. The division of labour between European countries will benefit everyone.

Thanks to the common budget, which will amount to around 20 % of total expenditure on nuclear research by the Member States, we shall enjoy the advantages of a large market. This is one of the main differences between the cooperation proposed by the OEEC (which can only be an advisory body with no powers of decision or common budget) and that proposed by Euratom.

However, Euratom will not prohibit any national programme, it will change almost nothing as far as the responsibilities of the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) are concerned. The national commissions will notify Euratom of their projects. The ‘European Commission’ will deliver its opinion, but it will not have the power to prevent a particular national initiative, even if it deems it unwise. On the other hand, it will be able to subsidise projects that it feels are particularly worthwhile.

Euratom can further the initiatives of public undertakings, hybrid public/private firms or private companies. It is a flexible, varied system as you see, and it has the best chance of being effective.

*— But why give supranational powers to the European Commission which will be the governing body of Euratom?*

— There is no ‘a priori’ policy in the choice of institutions in the Atomic Energy Community. The EDC and, to a large extent, the ECSC, were political constructions, which is not the case with Euratom. I therefore have difficulty understanding people who, having complained that the EDC was too political, now dismiss Euratom because it is a strictly economic response to a rapidly expanding Europe.

The supranational character of the European Community is necessary, not because of a ‘dirigiste’ philosophy, or for other political reasons, but for two technical reasons: 1. the management of a common budget, 2. the control of fissile material, effective only if Euratom has the monopoly over the ownership of nuclear fuel. In any hypothesis, even without Euratom, fissile material would be public property, as it is in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada.

*— Do you think that the compromise over military applications agreed by the last Council of Ministers could be accepted by our partners?*

— I think so. It certainly gives France a privileged position. Germany cannot benefit from this compromise, because the use of nuclear energy for military purposes is prohibited under the Treaty of Paris. Our country, out of the Six, is the one most likely to benefit from the possible use of atomic energy for national defence.

However, our partners will undoubtedly call for:

1. a certain amount of control over fissile material used for military purposes, without extending it as far as the manufacturing secrets. This control would be exercised with a view to preventing the nuclear fuel destined for defence being diverted to civilian projects in the event of shortages,

2. our willingness to play the game of total solidarity. If military applications lead to discoveries that may be used in the civilian domain, France will be expected to share its knowledge with its partners.

I am quite convinced that Euratom is the only way for France to take an honourable stance on both the military and civilian aspect of the atomic issue.'