

Statement by Joseph Bech (London, 5 May 1949)

Caption: On 5 May 1949, at the signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe in London, the Luxembourg Foreign Minister Joseph Bech emphasises the need for the peoples of Europe to commit themselves to the unification of the Continent.

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In establishing this Council of Europe we are planning the first stakes, as it were, on the road leading to European unity.

The great idea of a United Europe - but recently still considered as Utopian - today emerges from the realm of aspiration into the phase of practical realisation.

The road we have to travel is long and beset with difficulties.

The task that we are undertaking with so much prudence - perhaps too much prudence in the mistaken views of some who do not share the burdens of governmental responsibilities - will require great patience and much good will and mutual understanding. It can only be achieved at the cost of sacrifices mutually consented in the common cause, and on condition that it is supported by the *active* faith of our peoples.

It will be the task and the high responsibility of the Consultative Assembly to create and to maintain this European state of mind.

Strasbourg, that ancient city of European civilisation, will henceforth provide a platform from which I confidently trust we shall hear only words of goodwill and solidarity and which will give the desired widespread resonance to all those ideas which are the foundation of our common civilisation.

Europe *wants* to unite.

The agonising experience of two world wars has created more favourable conditions than ever before for the bringing together of the democratic peoples.

Europe *must* unite, if she is to survive and to maintain in the post-war world the glorious place which has been hers throughout the history of humanity.

My little country has too often in the past suffered from the conflicts which have ravaged our old Continent for me not to welcome with all my heart this first step towards the realisation of a closer European union.

In putting my country's signature to the Statute of the Council of Europe, I proclaim my faith in Europe's future with the conviction that I am acting as a good European.