

Address given by Dirk Stikker on the importance of European economic integration (Rotterdam, 18 January 1950)

Caption: On 18 January 1950, in an address to the Foreign Press Association in Rotterdam, Dirk Stikker, Netherlands Foreign Minister, states that the Netherlands is keen to work towards European integration, and calls on the press to support this effort to establish closer relations between European countries.

Source: The National Archives of the United Kingdom, [s.l.], Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, Records created and inherited by the Foreign Office, FO. European integration: economic and political union of Europe including Britain is desired by USA 1950, FO 371/87136.

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**Conclusion of Mr. Stikker's Speech to Members of the Foreign Press Association at their Annual Dinner
Rotterdam, 18th January, 1950**

[...]

I need not go into any detail about the importance of uniting Europe's resources and power. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that any such integration must be founded on firm economic principles. The report on the E.C.A., which President Truman presented to Congress last Friday, appeals to the Marshall countries to merge their economies and form one large production and trading territory, comprising 270 million people. The report stresses, however, that economic integration is an aim which can only be achieved as a long term plan. I should like to draw the particular attention of those who are fretfully urging greater speed in the process of integration to this export conclusion, coming to us from the United States. I must add, however, that the Dutch are determined to shorten this "long term" as far as possible, and wherever possible to remove the barriers which still handicap integration.

The time and the atmosphere are favourable. Throughout the world the shackles are being broken and the curtains drawn back which formerly made countries into isolated units. Numerous personal contacts between the official representatives of the various countries of Europe remove obstructions and create an atmosphere of confidence in which important results become possible.

This mutual confidence must not flourish only between individuals. It must be supported by a better international understanding of each other's burdens and desires. And here lies an important task for the international press, which, by means of its news services and other activities can make a great contribution towards the general desire for bringing the peoples closer to each other. I am speaking of significant reporting - not of mere daily news-gathering, which, owing to its hasty character, can hardly be expected to promote sound opinion.

Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs may determine the foreign policy of a country, but their policy will ultimately fail if the basis of its principles is not clearly revealed. In this connection it is the duty of the national press to bring Government and people closer together; the international press has the task of creating a better understanding between the countries themselves.

Although thus far I have referred to the necessity of constructing joint European prosperity, this should not be seen as constituting the main stimulant for closer European cooperation. There is also the instinctive necessity to defend the old and glorious European culture against destructive influences, and above all there shines the ideal of world peace. This ideal has brought Europe into very close contact with the United States. The North Atlantic Treaty has put the seal on Europe's association with the United States in the search for peace - but not, however, for peace at any price. The Atlantic Charter outlined briefly and clearly the conditions to be fulfilled to establish law and order in this world and to warrant happiness and peaceful cooperation among its peoples. On these principles the Atlantic Treaty countries will stand firm. They are solemnly determined to resist jointly every form of aggression which might force the people into accepting a totalitarian way of life. The earnestness of their intentions is clearly shown by the treaties by which the United States bind themselves, within the framework of the Pact to supply real and concrete military aid. Holland, too, is on the point of signing such a treaty.

I should like to take this opportunity of stressing that nothing is more foreign to the people of the Netherlands than a desire for aggression. The scourge of World War II has wounded the people of this country too harshly. But the desire to defend and maintain the principles of humanity and freedom, without which the world would be doomed to slavery, is equally deeply rooted in the people of the Netherlands.