

## Address given by Pierre Frieden (Luxembourg, 12 December 1949)

**Caption:** From 11 to 20 December 1949, on the invitation of the three Benelux countries, Italian journalists set out on a voyage of discovery through Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. On 12 December, Pierre Frieden, Luxembourg Education Minister, presents the main elements of the Benelux idea to his guests.

**Source:** Bulletin d'information. dir. de publ. Service Information et Presse - Ministère d'Etat. 31.12.1949, n° 12; 5e année. Luxembourg. "Discours de Pierre Frieden (12 décembre 1949)", p. 324-325.

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‘Your Excellency,

Gentlemen,

They say that after-dinner speeches are the ransom and price paid for the pleasures of the table. Forgive me, then, if I interrupt your conversations. I am grateful and pleased to have the honour of welcoming Your Excellency, the Italian Minister, and your very distinguished delegation on behalf of my Government and especially of my colleague and friend, the Minister for Economic Affairs, who is ill and has been confined to his home.

I am also happy to be able to present my cordial greetings to the delegation of Italian journalists.

The Luxembourg Government attaches great importance to your visit to the Grand Duchy. We shall naturally do everything we can — in our tradition of hospitality — to make your stay in our small capital and our country pleasant and fruitful.

You have come here to study the economic system of Benelux and first of all the contribution being made by Luxembourg. You will look at its economic structure, its potential and its importance worldwide. I hope and trust that your journey to Benelux will be profitable and that it will enable you to make contact with its three peoples, convincing you that, in pooling their efforts in the economic domain, these three countries also want to join each other in further plans to form the first nucleus of unity which will soon — we hope — give birth to the great Union and unity of the West.

For almost five years now the three governments have been holding discussions on forming the Benelux union. Despite all the difficulties, it has been possible to make progress because, quite apart from any differences of opinion, there is a firm resolve — and I would like to stress this — to create this union of three.

You have arrived here at the very moment when a decision has been reached in Paris to form an economic and financial union that should bring together France, Italy and the three Benelux countries. We can tell you that we are aware of the major difficulties that will be encountered by Finebel. But we also know that all the difficulties will be solved, and that this will be done little by little, provided that there is no lack of goodwill or ability. We want to achieve our goal and to establish a lasting project. This project consists of breaking down the barriers between the peoples of Western Europe, bringing them close to each other again after centuries of separation and war, eliminating the frontiers that hamper progress and the march towards liberty and economic and social well-being.

Our small Grand Duchy has always contributed its determination to the quest for peacemaking and international union. It is this determination that makes our country a symbol in the political and diplomatic world, for it stands for the idea of international collaboration. Situated as it is in the midst of great nations, at the crossways of roads leading from East to West, from North to South, Luxembourg makes constant efforts and sacrifices to serve as a link rather than as an obstacle. It has always tried, as best it can, to nourish the idea of international union.

As journalists, your work is to inform the public, to become spokesmen for the ideas, desires and observations you have acquired in the course of your travels, testifying to them in your articles addressed to your own community. Yours is a great and noble work; may I take the liberty of asking you, when you write of Luxembourg, not to forget the aspirations of our people and above all of our Grand Duchess and her government.

The lesson we hope you will learn from your visit will be that, in spite of all the obstacles, despite all the difficulties, our three countries will not desist from their efforts. Each conference of the governments of Benelux takes us one step forward. In every grand plan there are setbacks, and there will also be setbacks in

the move that must be attempted towards an economic European Union.

It is for you, gentlemen, to help to avert a weakening of our resolve, to help by encouraging that resolve at the moments when it might flag. Our efforts are directed towards a great goal: we want to secure for Europe, our continent that has suffered so much over the centuries, a lasting, just and worthy peace comparable to the historic Pax Romana. May I recall the lines that the great poet Virgil dedicated to the Roman people, and that I should like to dedicate to the Europe of today: “Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento; Hae tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem” (*Remember, O Roman; make it your task to rule over nations and impose the ways of peace: these shall be your skills*).

I hope and trust that the union we are preparing will be the foundation for and guarantee of peace in Europe.’