

Statement by Count Carlo Sforza (London, 5 May 1949)

Caption: On 5 May 1949, commenting on the signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe in London, the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Carlo Sforza, presents the new institution as an instrument of peace in the service of European unification.

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Few international treaties have been signed under happier auspices than this Act. For many months we have been, in Berlin, under the nightmare of a threat of war and just today we learn that this threat is disappearing.

Let us give credit for this also to a reborn desire for peaceful understanding on the part of Moscow. But let us not forget that the signing of the Atlantic Pact and the conclusion of our work towards European Union have had, beyond doubt, a fundamental influence on what we desire with all our hearts: a constant will of peace.

But we must not indulge in pride: we have simply fulfilled the most elementary duty towards our peoples and towards peace; let us draw this conclusion: that only in union we will find strength.

If this instrument which we are signing today had been drafted by those theatrical dictators who brought Europe to the edge of catastrophe, hymns of praise would have reached the sky.

We, Democratic Governments, are far more modest - and perhaps sometimes we are wrong in being so; but we are not wrong when we rely on facts and on the future.

We firmly desire that the Union, to which we have decided to give the rather plain name of "Council of Europe," will soon show the world that it serves peace and the organisation of our old Continent. We shall succeed, if we are able to create a Europe in which national boundaries are not written in ink, but in pencil. We shall succeed if we always remember that history is the graveyard of those nations who did not dare to look forward to the future. Indeed, history should teach us today that our supreme duty is to organise Europe and to suppress its watertight compartments, so as to raise the general well-being to the same decent standard everywhere. The only way to be intelligently selfish is to be generous. It is for our sake that every one of us will, if need be, even accept sacrifices.

We are free and solid nations. The more we will organise ourselves, the more we shall be prosperous; the more we shall be prosperous, the more we will understand that our supreme necessity is one and only one: PEACE.