

Address given by Johannes Hoffmann on the Franco-German Agreement on the Saar Statute (23 October 1954)

Caption: On 23 October 1954, Johannes Hoffmann, Prime Minister of the Saar, delivers an address in which he welcomes the signing, in Paris, of the agreement concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and France on the future economic and political status of the Saar.

Source: CVP-Rundschau : Mitteilungsblatt der Christlichen Volkspartei des Saarlandes. Mai/Juni 1955, Nr. 3. Saarbrücken: Christliche Volkspartei des Saarlandes. "Keine Zeit mehr, an Vergangenes zu denken".

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‘It is time to stop dwelling on the past and stirring up old antagonisms. It is now time for the people of the Saar themselves, transcending all political parties and differences of opinion, to have the final say on the fate of their homeland. The final decision and the ultimate responsibility rest with you alone. The people of Germany and of France — indeed, people all over the world — are awaiting this decision. Your decision will hinge on whether the efforts that have been made with regard to Franco-German reconciliation and sincere cooperation for the future have succeeded and prevailed.

‘I should like to thank all my compatriots, men and women of the Saar and the younger generation, for whose sake all this must succeed.

‘You placed your trust in me and in us, even when faced by so many disappointments. You accompanied us on the long and arduous journey with your thoughts and your belief in the common goal that is now clearly placed within our reach.

‘At this juncture, our thanks are due to the German Federal Chancellor and the French Prime Minister and their staff, who have acted with great foresight and courage and in full awareness of their extraordinary responsibility regarding the decision that is to be made. All the people of Germany and France, all the people of Europe, but especially the people of the Saar, offer you their most sincere thanks. You have effectively developed a peace programme. We must also remember to thank the Lord, without whose grace the path to peace would not have been cleared to make way for a new beginning which gives hope to the people in East and West who themselves have endured such bitter anguish amid the discord of the past, both here in the border area and in the two countries.

‘Our homeland is now being called on to take a decision. A great deal of work and effort still lies ahead of us in the coming weeks and months. Nothing can or will prevent us from fulfilling our duty to the end for the sake of our homeland, for the sake of Germany and France, and for the sake of European unity!’