

T E X T O F S P E E C H

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DR. J. N. KARANJA,

VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI,

AT A CONGREGATION FOR THE INAUGURATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY AND FOR THE CONFERMENT
AND PRESENTATION OF DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS
HELD ON THURSDAY, 10TH DECEMBER, 1970

TEXT OF SPEECH BY DR. J. N. KARANJA,
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Your Excellency The President of our Republic, Your Excellency
Mama Ngina, Your Excellency The President of the Republic of
Uganda, Hon. Ministers, Chairman of Council, Distinguished
Guests, Colleagues, Students, Ladies & Gentlemen:

We are deeply honoured by your presence here, Sir,
and that of the First Lady. That you could find time amidst
your many commitments to be here with us is a touching
testimony of your love for the Institution we are about to
launch. In return, Sir, may I on behalf of the University
pledge our loyalty and devotion to your Government.

We are equally honoured by the presence of
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda and
by the Hon. Ministers who have come to represent His Excellency

the President of the Republic of Tanzania. Your presence here is a symbol of the strong bonds that unite our three neighbouring countries and it signifies the close co-operation between our sister universities: Makerere University and the University of Dar es Salaam.

The presence of so many guests from different countries, many of them Vice-Chancellors and Presidents of their Universities, who have come to share with us the pleasure of this memorable occasion, is a mark of our international status and of our close links with other institutions of higher learning overseas. We welcome you all here most warmly and hope that you will return to this "City in the Sun" in the future.

This is a significant day in the history of higher education in Kenya. We have gathered here today to formally inaugurate the University of Nairobi and to install you, Sir, as our distinguished and exalted

Chancellor.

On the firm foundation built by the University College, which was a constituent College of the University of East Africa, we are now embarking on our own independent path as a national University. This, then, is a day of rejoicing as well as a day of rededication and renewal of efforts by all of us. It is now our direct and onerous responsibility to shape and guide the University so that it will give service to the nation and to mankind.

As we enter University status it is only fitting to record our thanks to the many individuals who have participated in the College's growth; to the former Principals, staff and students, to East African Governments and peoples as well as the University of London whose fruitful association laid the foundation for the present development.

A university is a community of scholars. It is an association of persons, assembled for the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. It is a place of higher learning where students are trained for clear and independent thinking and for critical analysis.

The long-term objectives and goals of a University in any country are the same. The university stands

- (a) for the onward march of the human race towards higher objectives such as tolerance, humanism and reason;
- (b) to serve the cause of human progress by transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other through teaching;
- (c) to increase information and knowledge through relevant and meaningful research.

But the immediate goals of a university such as ours are determined by the social-economic conditions prevailing here.

The most salient characteristic of our society today is a rapid race for modernization. We are living in an age of transition and we are undergoing the pains that traditionally accompany this process. Those who are privileged to be at the University cannot live in isolation or be immune to the effects of the problems that face our society. More important they have a fundamental obligation to put the power of critical intelligence to work for the solution of these problems.

To this extent we, in consultation with all concerned, are obliged to design a system of education which will help to promote social change and contribute to rapid economic growth, not only by training educated manpower needed for specific tasks of development, but also by creating proper attitudes of mind in our people.

Kenya is an agricultural country with limited resources. One of the realities that we have to face today is the widening gap between urban and rural areas and the increasing unemployment and underemployment.

The main function of higher education thus far has been to prepare men and women for entry into selected jobs in Government, industry, commerce and large scale farming. This modern sector of the economy absorbs a small fraction of our labour force.

You, Sir, have on many occasions called for a decisive change in this pattern. Through your campaign of back to the land you have focussed on the reality of Kenya today. The bulk of our people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. This agrarian nature of our society is likely to continue for some time. In order to improve the situation we need to create prosperous rural economies which could provide expanding
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for manufactured goods and could reduce the ever increasing drift into cities by rural populations if industrialisation which is going on in the urban areas is not to grind to a halt and social services stretched to breaking points.

Through our various faculties such as Agriculture, Veterinary Science, Medicine, Architecture, Science, Education, etc., the University can play a strategic role in this field of national development. By re-arranging our curriculum, by emphasizing new requirements in our staffing and by redirecting and re-organising our research priorities to tackle the local issues, and, above all, by close co-operation with our Government, we could help in this rural transformation, which manifestly commands a high priority and which requires large scale investment in human and financial resources. The opportunity is there for the University students and teachers alike to apply themselves /scientifically...

scientifically and objectively to these problems that face our country. We have to think and then act on our thinking. We have to recognise the poverty, the unpleasant facts of ignorance, the disease, the social attitudes that prevail, and in that context to think about what we wish to do to ameliorate the situation.

Your Excellency, the University we are here to inaugurate is expanding rapidly. We have nearly 3,000 students today. This year alone we have exceeded our planned intake by 50%. There is, as you know, an incessant demand for higher education in the country. This is only right and proper because, as the nation grows, the aspirations of democracy and equality express themselves in a desire for more education, not less.

Since the pursuit of knowledge today needs vaster and vaster resources, material as well as financial, we
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are engaged in discussions with the Government to find the money needed to cope with our expanding numbers and activities and the obvious shortages. I would like here to acknowledge the help that we have received from your Government, Sir, and to hope that this generosity will continue in ever increasing amounts, so that we can discharge our responsibilities to the nation. May I also thank International Agencies and Governments, too numerous to list individually, who have contributed financially and with personnel to our growth.

We need more money for post-graduate research - research in social as well as natural sciences. This will also help us in our staff development. We have a big responsibility to attract local people to teach in our University, particularly in the technical and scientific faculties. Obviously we must Africanize the University which is now largely manned by expatriates. This can be done, apart from direct recruitment, through a programme of

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giving post-graduate scholarships to promising young men and women who would then come back to teach here.

We have obtained funds to erect a Faculty of Architecture building and the new Faculty of Agriculture building at Kabete and two new Halls of Residence to accommodate 600 students. We hope to get funds to erect a Law Faculty Building and a Science building.

But a university is not composed of buildings alone. It is composed of students primarily. We are striving to provide better facilities and amenities in the halls of residence and better sporting facilities for these young people in whose hands the future of the nation lies. The University exists to train them for leadership and service and we should encourage them to participate and to contribute in decision making. I am sure that, even though they at times may seem impatient and insistent, they are devoted and loyal to this their motherland. Our youth can exert

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sustained power if it acts with maturity which involves the readiness to assess realistically both the situation to be faced and one's own capabilities. Maturity means also understanding the nature of freedom.

Your Excellency, I shall shortly present to you those who are about to graduate. There are 494 such people from various faculties and disciplines in the University. My call to them and, indeed, to all University men and women is to uphold the cause of reason wherever they go, to whatever they set their hands. To uphold reason, not as a sole or sufficient answer, but as an indispensable part of that better Kenya, better Africa, and better world we wish to bring about. If we can do all this, both in the University and in our professions and callings beyond, then the promise for the future which the present holds is bright indeed. There is a marvellous vitality here. It is possible that it is greater now than at any time in our history.

To be sure, Sir, no generation is uniquely endowed with perception or judgement or compassion. Buit I believe that today's young people have a stronger will to work and to sacrifice for a better Africa than some that have gone before.

THE CHANCELLOR

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are here today also to salute the hero of our nation - His Excellency Mzee Jomo Kenyatta the President of the Republic.

This new national University wishes to honour the Chancellor as our first and distinguished graduate. We realise that no tribute, or eulogy, or, indeed, any phrase can be sufficient or adequate on an occasion such as this, because our debt to him is unpayable. His whole life has been spent in the struggle for Uhuru, human dignity, equality and for peace, and whatever I say here can hardly cover his many qualities

Our Chancellor is one of the greatest Africans of all times. He has been a symbol of the African peoples' fight against imperialism by asserting the idea of national self-esteem. All his schemes and planning, his ideas of

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at Githunguri and of social and political organization through K.C.A., K.A.U. and K.A.N.U. have at their back the search for unity and harmony in Kenya.

Born in rural Kenya and educated there, he is a self-made man who rose to great heights purely by dint of his own efforts. Leading a life of humble circumstances, becoming a journalist, a scholar and an author, and then a political leader, he inspired people to stand up for their rights.

He has known deprivation, humiliation and desolation. But he never accepted defeat. Sustained by the strong will of his people who were themselves brutalized and deprived by colonialism and imperialism, his faith in African revolution never diminished. Whether in the shambas of Sussex, the cold cobblestones of London or Manchester, or in Kapenguria, the burning pulse of African freedom continued to throb in his heart.

In one of his books he wrote thus:

"The African is conditioned by cultural and social institutions of centuries, to a freedom of which Europe has little conception, and it is not in his nature to accept serfdom for ever. He realises that he must fight unceasingly for his own complete emancipation, for without this he is doomed to remain the prey of rival imperialisms, which in every successive year will drive their fangs more deeply into his stability and strength." (1938)

To fight against this economic pillage and serfdom, he returned to Kenya to organize his people and lead them. His superb organizational ability was soon pervasive as masses began to pour into his meetings. With his comrades he travelled all of this land to address the people and to lay the foundations of the peoples' war against colonial tyranny. He went to the people, planned with them,

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starting with what they knew and building on what they had.

Marshalling his power of picturesque metaphor and allegory, he succeeded in knitting his people together effectively. By the time he was arrested and spirited away to be tried and imprisoned the seeds of Uhuru had been sown.

When Uhuru was finally won he said that this was not an end in itself and he gave us the slogan of HARAMBEE which became the evocative motto for the peoples of Kenya, calling upon them to forget the past and its tribulations and forge ahead as a united people from diverse cultures, tribes and races to a prosperous future. His counsel to the nation has been to reconcile and reconstruct.

In foreign affairs he has eschewed the conflict of ideologies by vigorously following the policy of non-alignment. Through his steadfast leadership he has enhanced Kenya's name abroad. Indeed, it is he who has given Kenya a name.

He has the most striking personality. Alike in youth and in age he looks like the true ideal of an African warrior: his tall strong figure, his noble profile, the air of timeless and unself-conscious bearing and dignity. This appearance is a real image of his character - heroic, fiery, eloquent and brave, indifferent to danger and adversity. He is magnanimous, tender-hearted and responsive to the most delicate refinement of feeling. His loyalty to friends and love of rural beauty and peace are well known. To be with him, if only for a few moments, is to have one's faith in life fortified and strengthened. It is no wonder that in so many people - friends, family, and people who work with him, high and low, he inspires an extraordinary devotion.

He dedicated his famous book "Facing Mount Kenya" to:
"All the dispossessed youth of Africa for the perpetuation
of communion with ancestral spirits through their fight

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for African freedom and in the firm faith that the dead, the living and the unborn will unite to rebuild the destroyed shrines."

Those who were unborn then are here before him, united and ready to help him to rebuild the destroyed shrines. It is they and the University who bestow on him the great honour of admission to the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

We are confident that the University of Nairobi will derive great benefit from the installation of such a distinguished statesman as our President to its highest office and similarly that Mzee will find that his well known interest in and concern with the problems of higher education will be stimulated and rewarded by his involvement with the affairs of the University of Nairobi.

Ladies & Gentlemen, The Chancellor of the University of Nairobi.