

PRESIDENT NYERERE'S SPEECH TO THE PAN-AFRICAN
CONGRESS - 19TH JUNE, 1974 - DAR-ES-SALAAM:

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Brothers and Sisters:

On behalf of the People of Tanzania I welcome you all to this Pan-African Congress. We in Tanzania are honoured to have the duty, and the responsibility, of being host to delegates from so many countries, and so many parts of the world. We hope that every one of our guests - whether they are here as delegates or observers - will feel at home in this country. We also hope very much that, by all of us working together, we shall make this Congress serve the cause of human liberation.

In this work we shall be building upon foundation laid by others, and in particular the leaders and participants in previous Pan-African Congresses. Many great names of Pan-African history would be included in a rollcall of those involved in this work in the past seventy-four years, and it is not possible to mention them all. Included would be names like Booker T. Washington; Marcus Garvey; Wallace Johnson; George Padmore; Ras Makonnen and many others.

It would be wrong, however, not to pay tribute to the special contribution made to this movement by Dr. William du Bois. For he attended the first Pan African Conference in London in 1900, which was sponsored by the Trinidad lawyer H. Sylvester Williams. He was then himself responsible for initiating and leading all the Pan-African Congresses - including that of 1945. To Dr. Du Bois, all Africans, and all people of African descent, owe a very great debt. He neither was, nor claimed to be, a popular mass leader. But as a man of ideas, of intellect, and organising ability, he played a big part in the advances towards human dignity which black people have recorded in this century. We are sorry that his widow, Mrs. Shirley Graham du Bois - who has, in her own right, made many contributions to our cause - is not able to be with us today.

We are able to welcome to this 1974 Congress a number of people who attended the Congress in 1945. But it is a matter of great regret to us all that President Jomo Kenyatta, who was the rapporteur on East African Affairs at the Fifth Congress, has not been able to join your deliberations today. We should have liked an opportunity to pay tribute to him in person. As this is not possible I know that this Conference will wish to send a message of greetings and appreciation to President Kenyatta through Mr. Robert Matano, the Minister for Information of Kenya. Let me say also that for many of us the late President Kwame Nkrumah is present in our memory as we meet, both because of his contribution to the 1945 Congress and because of his work for African liberation in succeeding years.

One of the many things the late President Nkrumah did for Africa after Ghana's independence was, of course, the calling of the All African Peoples Organisation meeting in Accra in 1958. This Organisation - which had later meetings in Tunis and Cairo - was important in that, although it confined full participation to residents of Africa, it did include representatives from North Africa as well as Africans of European and Indian descent. It thus reflected the geographical unity of this continent - a policy which has also been followed in the invitations to our present Congress.

But it was not only people who have since achieved international fame who caused past Congress to succeed, and who therefore gave encouragement to the forces of freedom and human equality everywhere. We are indebted to all those who took a constructive part in those Congresses outside Africa, however humble that part may have appeared to be. And to an even greater extent we are indebted to all those who followed up those meetings with work for the anti-colonial and anti-racialist movements, either in their own countries, or elsewhere.

The size of that debt must not be under-estimated by us, its inheritors. For the Pan-African Congresses . . . /3

of the past laid foundations on which all the independence movements of Africa South of the Sahara were able to build. Even more important, these Pan-African Congresses or black men and women laid the foundation for the Organisations of African Unity. It was they who first learnt, applied, and taught, the lesson of unity. The people of Africa absorbed that lesson; the O.A.U. is one of its fruits. And the O.A.U. is not a black men's organisation; it is an organisation including men of all colours.

It is worth emphasizing this development, for it reflects the fundamental unity of man's struggle for liberation. The Pan-African Congress movement was formed to promote freedom and justice for black men and women. It was led by the logic of that demand to work for the liberation of Africa from colonialism, oppression, and racialism. That, in its turn, requires the unity of Africa - including the non-black Africans of North Africa and elsewhere. So the independent African states formed the O.A.U. in 1963; as consequence this Pan-African Congress has Non-Black participants, and has to concern itself with oppression affecting any man, of any colour.

But it is not only in the geographical spread of its delegates that this Congress is different from those preceding it. Past Congresses had to be held outside Africa. For in this continent there were until 1957 only two states in which black people were rulers as well as ruled. Neither of these - nor the one black ruled sovereign state in the Caribbean - was in a position to give positive leadership to the black liberation movement.

Thus it was at meetings in Europe that the demands for justice to Africa and to Africans had to be expressed. And it is worth noting that they always were expressed. The tone of the demands changed over the years, but the demands have been consistent. It is both an illustration of this, and an indication of the work which remains to be

done, to recall that in 1900 the Pan-African Conference submitted a Memorial to Queen Victoria of Britain protesting against the treatment of Africans in South Africa and Rhodesia. By 1945 the 5th Pan African Congress was expressing the same concern more forthrightly. For it ended "We demand for black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this one world for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation."

Now we can meet in Africa. For although we do not yet have unity and federation, at least the independence aspect of the 1945 demand has been made a reality in large parts of our continent.

And the final difference between this and previous Congresses also arises because of our partial success. The first five Congresses could only be held because they were promoted and attended by concerned individuals. Some few of the participants had the backing of trade union or political or social organisations. But the status of black people in the world was such that the individuals could only be representatives in the sense that a suffering and aware man can always speak for others in the same condition. These men and women acted because they could no longer accept without protest the almost sub-human status which had been assigned to them by the world's dominant political and economic forces. It is in part because of their work that we are here today, and that so many delegates to this Congress can be representative of the peoples in their nations.

For most delegates here have been sent by the people's governments of African and Caribbean states, - governments which only exist because of the earlier work of individuals, like those who founded the Congress movement. Other delegates from Africa are representatives of national liberation movements, whose credentials are vouched for by

the fact that a struggle which does not have the people's support is doomed to rapid extinction. And in addition, we have with us representatives of popular organisations from countries where people of African descent are a minority of the national population.

Let me, at this point, make it clear that I believe that the participation in the Pan-African Congress of concerned individuals and groups is as important now as it has been in the past. For it is already only too clear that the governments of Africa and the Caribbean are no more composed of angels than any other governments. Certainly independent Africa cannot claim to have been free from the sort of oppression and injustices which Pan-African Congresses have condemned in the past. All of our governments, and all of our people, could therefore benefit from listening to the comments of responsible and sympathetic individuals and groups who are concerned with human rights and human justice in general. This Congress is not a forum for attacks on particular governments. But it would be failing in its duty if it did not recognise the need for a demand that justice be done within the newly independent nations as well as in the older countries.

These facts about the composition of this Congress mean that Congress participation is not based on geography, nor on the present or potential achievement of governmental power, nor on international economic linkages. Our presence here is not even a matter of political ideology. Not everyone here, and not every government or organisation represented, would be pleased to be described as 'socialist' however vague in meaning that word has become. What, then, is it that links us together and causes us to meet in this Congress?

As I hope I have already made clear, the answer to that question lies in history, and in history's legacy to the present. But it is important for us to understand the full

implications of that answer in order to ensure that this Congress does not subvert the cause of liberation which past Pan-African Congresses have been serving.

For the composition of the early Pan-African Congresses was determined by men's need to respond in unison to a common suffering. From the very beginnings of this movement, until now, men and women of Africa, and of African descent, have had one thing in common - an experience of discrimination and humiliation imposed upon them because of their African origins. Their colour was made into both a badge, and a cause of their poverty, their humiliation, and their oppression.

Peoples of the Americas, and of Europe, were even by 1900 citizens of developed and rich nations. But those who had some African ancestry were not allowed to share equally in this development or these riches. They were - and are - Americans, or West Indians, as much as any of the other immigrant peoples who inhabit those lands. The fact that their ancestors had been taken to those countries as slaves did not alter that. Indeed it made their nationality more important to them because their ancestral languages, cultures, and traditions, had been torn from their heritage by the act of slavery. Yet despite this, the continuing technological and political backwardness of Africa was used as a psychological weapon to undermine their self-confidence. And the colour which they inherited became the means of enforcing the segregated and unequal treatment from which they suffered.

Some individuals did manage to break through the educational barriers around their colour, and were able to analyse their own position and that of their fellow-sufferers. They then realised that, although they were Americans or West Indians, their demand for dignity and equality was bound up with the status of people in another continent. Their own experience, in other words, forced them to be internationalist,

and to be concerned with the condition of men elsewhere in the world.

And the Africa with which their fellow country men persisted in associating them was, in modern terms, not a continent to inspire pride in a people wishing to assert their equality. Its people had lost the fight for freedom against technologically superior forces, and were living under various forms of colonial rule. Their culture and way of life were mocked and derided; their technological backwardness remained. Politically and economically they lived as inferiors in their ancestral homelands. The forces of freedom appeared to be - indeed were - almost everywhere in disarray or smarting from a succession of defeats. Only in a few areas were organisations and individuals still openly and actively asserting their rights as Africans to govern Africa.

The Pan-African Congresses were thus a recognition by the peoples of African descent, and those of Africa, that only by proclaiming the human rights and dignity of all black men could any of them defend their humanity. They all had to fight against policies and attitudes which made blackness or African ancestry into a social, economic, and political disadvantage everywhere in the world. And they all had to fight for the freedom of nations inhabited by African people. Thus colour became a uniting factor among peoples otherwise divided by nationality, political creed, religion, and culture.

The Pan African movement was born as a reaction to racialism. And racialism still exists. Nowhere has it been completely defeated. In large areas of Africa it is now proclaimed as a state philosophy, and imposed ruthlessly on the black majority of the population. The evil which required the birth of the Pan-African movement has not yet made meetings like this irrelevant.

Let us make it quite clear. We oppose racial thinking. But as long as black people anywhere continue to be

oppressed on the grounds of their colour, black people everywhere will stand together in opposition to that oppression, in the future as in the past. As they do that they will demand the support of all men of good will, - and past experience, as well as the composition of this Conference, shows that they will receive it.

For although this Congress movement was made necessary by racialism, and was itself originally confined to black people, our particular struggle for dignity has always been one aspect of the world wide struggle for human liberation. And many men and women who are not black are quite as active and involved in that struggle as those who are black. Many at this Conference have been sent by independent governments which include people, and are supported by people, of different colours and different ancestry. That fact is both an example, and a measure, of the partial success so far achieved in the struggle against racialism. We must not jeopardise that advance now.

For if we react to the continued need to defend our position as black men by regarding ourselves as different from the rest of mankind we shall weaken ourselves, and the racialists of the world will have scored their highest triumph. The struggle for human equality is now world wide. Oppression is not always based on colour; the humiliations of enforced social inequalities are not only practised against men for their blackness.

And we who learned to oppose oppression because we suffered from it will be expected - and rightly expected - to give full support to others who band together to fight for their rights. We have demanded support. We have to be ready to give supports.

Our history means that our capacity to help others is limited in practical terms. But that same history means that we must respond positively to the cry of the oppressed anywhere in the world.

And in particular we have a duty to examine ourselves, and how we are using the advances we have made. When black people have attained self-government, the racialists do not stop their hostility; for their own purposes they are quick to attack injustices in black ruled states. But that fact does not excuse the injustices. It only makes them more embarrassing. Those black people who have been fighting against oppression have an even greater responsibility to fight against it when it is done by those who have benefitted from our past struggles. We must look at ourselves, at our own governments, and our own progress; we must ask ourselves whether there is evidence that black people, wherever they are self-governing, are everywhere trying really hard to establish just societies. If this is not the case, can we remain quiet and still continue to demand support for our fight against racialism and oppression when it is practised against us by others?

In my opinion, therefore, the purpose of this Conference is to discuss the means, and further the progress, of opposition to racialism, colonialism, oppression and exploitation everywhere. Our discussions will have special reference to our own experience - past and present. But they must take place in the context of a world wide movement for human equality and national self-determination.

For despite all that remains to be done, our struggle against colonialism and racialism has made great progress since 1945. Political independence is a fact for large areas of Africa and the Caribbean. Colonialism has begun its journey out of life and into the museums of history. We now have to recognise that an end to colonialism is not an end to the oppression of man, even if it means an end to oppression based solely on colour. And we now have to work against

oppression by the leaders of those countries which have recently attained freedom, whether this is directed against other black men and women, or against people of different races.

The last 29 years have also seen great progress in the Human Rights movement. People are now conscious of racialism; it is no longer accepted as part of the natural order of things. Indeed, the very bitterness of current controversies is itself an indication of our progress. For the struggle has been joined; the victims no longer acquiesce in their own degradation, and many people are no longer willing to be identified with the humiliation of other men just because their skin colour is different.

In economic matters our advance has been much slower. It is true that black people have, in many countries, been incorporated into the prevailing capitalist system; they are no longer always excluded just because of their colour. And in Africa and the Caribbean black people now occupy the whole range of jobs; they are no longer confined to low-paid labouring and clerical tasks.

Yet it is also true that within nations, and in the world taken as a whole, it is an economic disadvantage to have a black skin. The average level of income, and the average level of employment, is lower for black citizens in the United States, Canada, and Europe, than it is for non-black citizens. The struggle to be accepted as a worker, and valued as a worker, has to continue. And it is also true that the black nations of the world are all listed among the world's poor states; sixteen of the 25 poorest nations of the world are in Africa.

Yet in economic matters the real problem is not colour. Both within nations, and between nations, the problem is basically that of oppression arising from an exploitative system. We are neither poor, nor are we kept poor, because we are black. We remain poor because of the world trading

and monetary systems - and these, whatever their other disadvantages, are colour blind. They adversely affect the whole of the Third World. This means that, in order to overcome its economic problems, Africa has to act in unity within the continent, and in cooperation with other poor nations of the world. Pan-Africanism is important here when it causes the people of this continent to work for unity. It could be disastrous if it resulted in a division between, say, black Africa and Arab Africa. And Pan-Africanism would be doing a great disservice to human liberation if it caused Africa and the Caribbean to try to isolate themselves from the rest of the Third World, - or if it provoked other parts of the Third World into isolating Africa and the Caribbean.

These things are being learned. Within Africa and the Caribbean economic cooperation between states has made some headway, and work to that end continues. At the same time wider groups of Third World countries are working together on an ad hoc basis - at UNCTAD Conferences, in negotiations with the European Economic Community, and in other necessary centres. Thus, even in this area, the struggle for human equality and dignity continues, and is beginning to show the first signs of progress.

We have, in other words, made advances in all fields. But that must be an inspiration to further effort; it must not make us complacent. For the obstacles which have yet to be overcome are the most difficult of any, and unless we continue to advance the whole cause of human freedom and equality could be pushed back again. Our gains are not only grossly insufficient; they are also insecure until racialism is overcome everywhere and injustice is being challenged in all fields.

South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia, Angola Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Spanish Sahara, the Territory of the Afars and Issas: all those countries have yet to be won for the cause of

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Until a few weeks ago it would have been necessary to expect that at least the first six of these would have had to be won through further years of bitter and bloody struggle, as Freedom Fighters inched their way forward against strong and ruthless enemies.

That may still be true. But since the coup d'etat in Portugal a new possibility has arisen for Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola. In these territories it may now be possible to achieve independence for the people without continuing the wars of liberation which have been waged for the past ten years. At this moment we cannot be sure. But there are certain things about which we can be certain.

The Liberation Movements want peace, just as Africa wants peace in the Portuguese colonies. We hope that it will now be possible to achieve that peace, together with the freedom which we demand, and for which we will - if necessary - continue to sacrifice peace. And while the Liberation Movements enter into this new phase of their struggle, they need full support from this Pan-African Congress. They have not flinched in the struggle of the past; they will not falter now. But they, and their people, are alone qualified to judge their next steps forward, just as they have been the ones who have suffered the agonies of modern warfare - and who will suffer it again if their military struggle has to be continued. We would be doing a terrible thing if any words of ours, here Dar-es-Salaam, should make their task more difficult.

But whatever happens as regards the Portuguese colonies, the fight for freedom in Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa will go on. The free states of Africa and the Caribbean could not stop it even if they wanted to do so.

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For one fact is fundamental to the future of this continent and of the world. Humanity is indivisible. No man can live with self-respect, or deserve the respect of others, if he acquiesces in the humiliation of human beings on the grounds of colour or race. This is true in Southern Africa, where white people are oppressing non-white peoples. It is true also in the rest of Africa, and in the Caribbean, where power is held by non-white peoples. Whoever imposes it, however large or small the number of victims, and however understandable the feelings of fear or revenge which promote it, racial discrimination is the mother of war, and suffering, and loss of freedom for everyone. For if men cannot live as men they will at least die as men.

Mr. Chairman: this Congress will be discussing questions affecting the liberation of men who have suffered, or are suffering, by virtue of their blackness, and their African ancestry. But men cannot become free by enslaving other men. Therefore the Congress will be discussing matters affecting the liberation of mankind.

This means that many items are on the Agenda of the Congress, dealing with oppression and exploitation over most parts of the globe. But this Congress is not the Organisation of African Unity, nor the Non-Alligned Conference, nor a gathering of the Group of 77, and it would be a serious mistake for us to act as if it were. Instead I hope that we shall concentrate on those matters to which we, as members of a group, and as individuals, can make a positive contribution wherever we live, whatever our religion or political beliefs, and whatever our nationality. For we are not only men linked to Africa by birth and history. We are also citizens of our own nations; we are also Christians or Moslems, socialists, conservatives,

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capitalists or communists. And these other things are more truly a reflection of ourselves than is our colour or ancestry. That we inherit and cannot change even if we wish. These others are matters of choice and decision - thus reflecting what we really are as individuals. It is by the manner in which we carry out our responsibilities to the cause of justice in groups unrelated to our percentage that we shall show the practical meaning of this Pan-African Congress.

For one thing is very important. If this Congress issues declarations of support for the Liberation Movement of Africa, those declarations must be supported by a commitment to action in future months and years. The words must be backed by political and material support as the struggle continues.

And if this Congress recognises the need for unity in the Third World in order to overcome the economic injustice from which so many people now suffer, this too must be followed by work to that end. The same is true for any demand to an end to racialism; it must be followed by individual and group actions against racialism of any kind, and anywhere.

Our tasks are clear. We have to play our full part as world citizens in development of humanity; to do that we have to shake off the mental effects upon ourselves of colonialism and discrimination. We have to fight colour prejudice and discrimination everywhere; and we have to assert - and where possible promote - the rights of all the world's citizens for an equal share of the world's resources.

Brothers and Sisters. The people of Tanzania hope that this Congress will contribute to those purposes. We therefore wish you great success in your deliberations.

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