

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON CEREMONY, JULY 27, 1942.

Speech by the Chairman of the Governing Body of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the Rt. Hon. Lord Hailey.

I need not say how welcome it was to the Governing Body of the School when the Ministry of Information, which must clearly have a more certain eye for the right news than some people suppose, suggested this ceremony. I need not say also how grateful we were to you, Mr. Vice Chancellor, when you consented by your presence here to give proof of the significance attached to the work of the School by the Great University to which we belong. I must yet again acknowledge on behalf of the School our deep obligation to the Ministers of the Crown who have given to us and to our students, the encouragement of their presence here today.

This course of studies is a conspicuous proof of the value of the contribution which what are normally the arts of peace can make to our war effort. Our Director, Dr. Turner, had at an early stage in the war pressed on the Government, with all the energy and foresight which has always characterized his work for the school, the need for some provision such as these courses now supply. It was not, however, till a somewhat later date that his instances reinforced by a personal appeal made by our Treasurer, Sir Maurice Jenks, to the late Secretary of State for War, secured acceptance for the scheme from the War Office, and the ready and unhesitating sponsorship given to it by the President of the Board of Education, saw it brought into execution with a rapidity, which if I do not venture to describe it as unusual, was certainly most gratifying.

I have spoken of this as one of the contributions which we have been able to make to the war. There are others, particularly in regard to the training of officers in Indian and Burman languages, but I do not detail these here, because, transcendent as are our war needs, I wish to take the occasion to refer to considerations which those precise people, the grammarians, would probably describe as falling in the Paulo-post-future tense. It would be less than human if I did not take this opportunity of doing so. It is not because I see before me now some of the High Priests of Government policy, who are for the moment undefended by that screen of assistants and sacristans who at other times stand between them and those who seek to impress their views upon them. I know that I need take no ^{such} advantage of them. They will readily agree that, for the future, cultural contacts must form a far more active part of our approach not only to the people of our Eastern dependencies, but to other peoples of the Near and Far East, such for instance, those of whom we have the distinguished representatives here today.

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Much of the good relations which we have enjoyed in the past has been due to the possession of certain human qualities of our own. We have had our own conception of the fair mindedness, decency, and respect for the views of others, which should regulate our conduct towards those of whom we happen to be in political control; and we have sought to be good neighbours to those whom we have encountered on other terms. These qualities have stood us in good stead in the past and have carried us far. But we need something more today, and shall need it increasingly in the future. We have to deal now with peoples who will judge us far more than has hitherto been the case by the qualities of the social relations which we maintain with them and by the personal links which we can establish. That is not merely a political consideration, but I know that it is fully recognised also by those whose concern it is to extend our business connections with those countries.

The first road to this end lies through a greater familiarity with their languages, but this will be insufficient unless the members of our community residing among them can show also that they have a genuine interest in their art, their way of life, their literature, and their institutions. It has always been the aim of the Governing Body of the School to make it a centre not only of linguistic but of cultural study. But more than this it is our ambition that it shall become a common meeting ground where students from among our own people, and those who come to us from the East or Africa, can find a means of studying amid congenial social surroundings, those common interests, and forming those personal ties, which go so far to assist the growth of national friendships. There is admittedly still much to be done before we can achieve this; but after today we shall appeal with all the greater confidence for that support from the University, the Government, and the business world, which will be necessary to us. We shall do so in the firm conviction that we have here a function which if duly fulfilled, will make the School an asset of pre-eminent value to the Empire.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION