

Radio broadcast by Leabua Jonathan on the independence of Lesotho (4 October 1966)

Caption: On 4 October 1966, the day on which the British protectorate of Basutoland becomes an independent country under the name of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Joseph Leabua Jonathan, the Lesotho Prime Minister, addresses the nation.

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Last updated: 01/03/2017

Annex F

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PRIME MINISTER'S BROADCAST TO THE NATION

A new era is opening for every Mosotho on this, our Independence Day - and by Mosotho I mean everyone who has made Lesotho his home and owes allegiance to her, irrespective of race, creed or colour.

Today is a time for jubilation and rejoicing - and rightly so - but it is much more than that. It is a time for remembrance; remembrance of the work of those who have laboured in the past to make the achievement of our full nationhood possible but who are no longer with us to share our triumph; remembrance of acts of generosity and kindness shown to the Basotho over the years by many peoples and many governments; and remembrance especially of friendships forged in two world wars which will be strengthened and not weakened by Independence.

This is also - and more importantly - a day of dedication. The road ahead will not be easy and it is fitting that we should all pause to reflect upon where the path of dedication must lead. In our march forward into the future we will not disdain to look back to our past and preserve what is good in it, but we dare not be shackled by the past. I speak to you not only as Prime Minister but as a descendant of the great Moshoeshoe, through the House of Kolapo, and I rejoice that at this time when we turn a new page in our constitutional advancement, the nature of our Government is still a Constitutional Monarchy and that we have as Head of State a great-grandson of Moshoeshoe through the House of Letsie. I would not willingly see our traditional way of life swept away heedlessly, but we do well to remember that Basotho custom and tradition is not, and never has been, a fixed and immutable code. Like every healthy and living institution, it has sought constantly to adapt itself to the changing needs of the times. Moshoeshoe himself was a progressive forward-looking man who never hesitated to adapt our customs to the humanizing force of Christianity and to the demands of a changing world. Our customs and practices have come down to us like the unwritten conventions of the British Constitution. They are our own but we have allowed them to be influenced by the times and have incorporated improvements and changes to suit the needs of the times.

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Consider, for example, the land of Lesotho. This is our most important asset. Our constitution makes it quite plain that land is the property of the nation, held in trust for the nation by the Paramount Chief and the Chiefs. It is fortunate that we are going into Independence with the principle firmly entrenched, that land is a national asset. This fundamental safeguard disposes of any fears there might have been, that the Basotho were in danger of losing ownership and control of their own land. But legal protection is not enough. We must still face the problem of preserving the soil itself so that we can pass on our national heritage in-tact and unspoilt to our children and their children's children. Our present system of land use and land allocation have many weaknesses. To remedy them we must use the combined wisdom of all sections of our nation. Chiefs, commoners, businessmen, scholars, teachers and ministers shall all co-operate in examining the problem and in formulating a solution to the question of how we can make the best use of our land and at the same time preserve it for future generations of Basotho. I hope that the National Planning Board established under the Constitution will faithfully interpret and represent national opinion on this subject and secure agreement among all sections of the nation on the remedies to be applied to the abuses and weaknesses in our present system of land usage.

I have a special liking for farmers and I am particularly concerned that all should enjoy the greatest possible security in the occupancy of land; that they should be able to invest confidently in the improvement of their own soil, to maintain and increase its productivity; and that the land should be farmed wisely and well.

I would give you my assurance now that it will be the earnest endeavour of our Government and myself to ensure that each and every member of our nation, whatever his station in the life of our country, will receive equality of treatment under the law and in accordance with the wishes of the Basotho people as a whole. It follows that the trust imposed upon us all is a big one. Government cannot begin to promote economic development and national prosperity, Government cannot even govern, unless it is able to assure the people who elected it, that land will be used in accordance with their wishes.

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We must not forget the problem of providing land for industry. I believe that if we put aside petty jealousies and prejudice, and examine the position carefully and intelligently, it will be possible to find a solution that will not undermine our basic principle, that the land belongs to the nation, but will at the same time enable us to give sufficient security and inducement to would-be industrialists.

Apart from the wise and democratic use of our land, there is another golden key to our future, and this is education. If democracy is to work in Lesotho, if Government is to work efficiently, if we are to be true to the ideals embodied in our Bill of Human Rights and Freedoms, the heavy burden will lie on every individual, on every parent, every school teacher and particularly on our University. Our needs are great. Many of them require money to satisfy, but education can, with effort, be within the reach of all. Self-education and self-knowledge will be the best guarantee of a sane and healthy Lesotho. Your Government will bend every effort to ensure that the people have access to learning and that as far as possible education will be provided at the lowest possible cost. Self-help should be our guiding star. No matter how good our framework of government may be, we will not get anywhere as a people unless we are prepared to work hard at all levels of our national life. The salvation of Lesotho is in the hands of every man, woman and child who live here. I appeal to you all. Let us do more and talk less. Let us have action and not mere words.

We are becoming an independent State in a dangerous and unsettled world. We are a very small nation, and we are poor; but having regard to our geographic situation, it is inevitable that our representatives will be called upon to express views on one side or another on great and controversial issues which occupy so prominent a place in the daily news. Let us make it quite clear that, while we have our principles we will never seek to interfere in the domestic affairs of other nations.

As a small nation we were able to survive because we were a peaceful people. We fought only when we were attacked. We never allowed ourselves to be divided by internal conflicts caused by tribalism, and in the same sense we shall resist any attempts to divide us through political affiliations.

Divergence of opinion is not to fight. My special word of thanks goes to the Basotho, as a whole, for participating in such large numbers in these celebrations, despite discouragement from certain quarters. My appeal to you is for unity at home after Independence so that we may work together for peace and the unity of Africa in the Organisation of African Unity as well as for the peace of the whole world. But peace, unity and common understanding must have their origin here at home. We believe in a democratic way of life and in freedom for all, irrespective of race, colour or creed. We desire to be given a full and fair opportunity to show that our way of life can work. We do not expect to be interfered with and we will not interfere with others. With others we deal with tolerance, and to the best of our ability, with understanding and compassion. We ask for similar treatment. This is what I mean when I speak of "principled co-existence."

I would like to say a word to our European friends who have contributed to our national life. I think I speak for all Basotho when I thank the Missions for their pioneer work in education. As a result of their labours the level of literacy in Lesotho is higher than most other States in Africa. I know I have the support of all my fellow countrymen when I say that we shall encourage and support the Missionary efforts of all denominations in the noble work of spreading the Christian message. To the traders I also have a message of gratitude for their pioneer work in road making and for bringing to the most remote areas the necessities of civilised life. No man and no community can prosper in isolation and we shall always value the assistance and co-operation of our European friends in whatever way they can contribute to our national progress and prosperity. Those who have decided to leave the country, we thank most heartily for the work they have done and we shall always remember them as our friends.

I am only too well aware that the road ahead of us will not be easy, but difficulties exist to be overcome. We have the raw materials of sound nationhood right here in Lesotho. Our men and women are made of the stuff that is needed. Difficulties will try them but will not overcome them. Like good steel they will be tempered and eventually emerge the better for their experience. I ask you not to allow your minds to be clouded by fears and doubts for the future of an independent Lesotho. Let us go to work immediately to build a more prosperous country. Let us face

Let us face the future with courage. Differences about ways and means, there will always be, but there can surely be no room for differences about our ultimate objective. We all want a happy land in which there will be a full and worthwhile life for every Mosotho.

Let us go forward then, and together build a nation on the foundations of peace, wisdom, goodwill and good sense laid by our king and father the great Moshoeaose. May God bless Lesotho - May God bless us all!!

K H O T S O !!

P U L A !!

N A L A !!