

## GRADUATION 2008

### Presentation speech for Professor Ejup Ganic for the honorary degree of Doctor of Science of the University *honoris causa*

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Students, Colleagues, Friends.

In April 2003, I was sitting at my desk contemplating some esoteric aspect of family law when I received a call from the Vice-Chancellor's office asking me to go to Sarajevo in Bosnia & Herzegovina and talk to a man named Professor Ejup Ganic who wished to discuss his plans to start a new university there.

I am embarrassed to admit that, at that time, I knew little of the man or his country other than, that in 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne, was assassinated there and so began World War 1, and that there had been a tragic war there and that the city of Sarajevo was under siege from 1992 to 1996.

One obeys Vice-Chancellor's orders so I caught the plane to Sarajevo and was met at the airport by a most charismatic man, Professor Ejup Ganic, who stands before us now.

I learned that Margaret Thatcher, whom you all know not only as the one time Prime Minister of Great Britain but also as the former Chancellor of this University, had become a friend of Professor Ganic during the Siege of Sarajevo. Professor Ganic, who was a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time, had escaped through a tunnel, which he had had constructed under the airport runway, and had gone to Geneva, where Margaret Thatcher was staying, to ask her help for his beleaguered city.

Lady Thatcher, in her autobiography, describes vividly their meeting. She had provided a substantial afternoon tea for Professor Ganic because she was aware that he had been existing on minimal food for a long period of time. He was ravenously hungry but far too polite to demolish the fare provided for him in front of Lady Thatcher. He waited until she had left the room to telephone the Foreign Secretary about the dreadful situation facing the people of Bosnia & Herzegovina, before wolfing down the feast provided for him.

Lady Thatcher was delighted. By exiting the room she had killed two birds with one stone. She had secured the help of the Foreign Secretary to involve the United Kingdom in the resolution of the crisis in Bosnia & Herzegovina and, in addition, had ensured that Ejup Ganic was satisfactorily fed.

Thus began their long relationship. After the war was over, Professor Ganic confided in Lady Thatcher, his long held belief that the only way forward for his country was to educate the young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than engage them in conflict, and to that end he wished to set up a new university which would have as its

collaborative partner a British University. Lady Thatcher immediately suggested Buckingham as that partner.

From that first moment when we met in the airport at Sarajevo, Professor Ganic began an intense discussion of his plans to create an independent university in Sarajevo. The conversation only ended when my plane flew out 4 days later; I was allowed brief moments in which to sleep.

This was a man who was determined. His academic credentials were impeccable, a Bachelor of Science and a Master's degree from Belgrade University; a doctorate in Mechanical Engineering from MIT in Cambridge Massachusetts; a tenured professorship in Chicago at the University of Illinois, and numerous scientific papers to his name. He also had industrial experience, having returned to Bosnia & Herzegovina to serve on the Board of Directors of the UNIS Corporation and head its research institute. Professor Ganic had held and, indeed, still holds, visiting positions in numerous universities and has been elected to the membership of the prestigious Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was co-founder and President of the Centre for Democracy in Vienna, an international institution devoted to the development of democracy in the Balkans and Central Europe; he was founder of the MET Foundation for young people; he actively helped to establish the Women's Forum and a Gender Centre, and founded the Bosnian Peace Corps, an association for the development of an international cooperative program of volunteers to work in the post-war recovery of Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Ejup Ganic's political experience, and his exceptional courage and leadership during the war, made it clear to me that he would have few difficulties in setting up a new university. They are qualities which all vice-chancellors need as Dr Kealey will confirm.

On my return to Buckingham after that first visit to Sarajevo, the Vice-Chancellor accepted that we should do everything we could to help in this new venture, and one year later the new university, the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology came into existence. It is known colloquially in Bosnia & Herzegovina as Ganic's University! At its inauguration elderly professors and members of the Academy of Arts and Sciences openly wept at the thought that education rather than war would be at the forefront of Bosnia & Herzegovina's future.

In June 2008, the first students from the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology will graduate and what an exhilarating moment that will be for them, Professor Ganic, and for Buckingham.

This exciting venture has been achieved by the determination and enthusiasm of one man who believes passionately that education and not war is the way forward.

Throughout his career, Ejup Ganic has been supported by his wife Fahrija and more recently by his adult children Emina and Emir, the latter a graduate of Buckingham. They share this honour with him today.

Before I ask the Chancellor to confer the degree, I would like to read out a special message for Professor Ganic which Lady Thatcher has sent and requested that it be read out at this degree ceremony

Dear Dr Ganic

I am delighted to join with your many other friends and colleagues in congratulating you as you receive an honorary degree from the University of Buckingham.

In recent years you have worked tirelessly to strengthen the link between the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology and Buckingham, and I am pleased that they are now thriving.

I wish you well on this very special day.

All good wishes  
Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

Chancellor, I am both proud and delighted to present to you Professor Ejup Ganic, President of the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, for the degree of Doctor of Science *Honoris Causa*.

**Dr Mary Welstead, BSc (Econ) (Lond), MA, PhD (Cantab)**  
**23 February 2008**