

South

The Third World Magazine

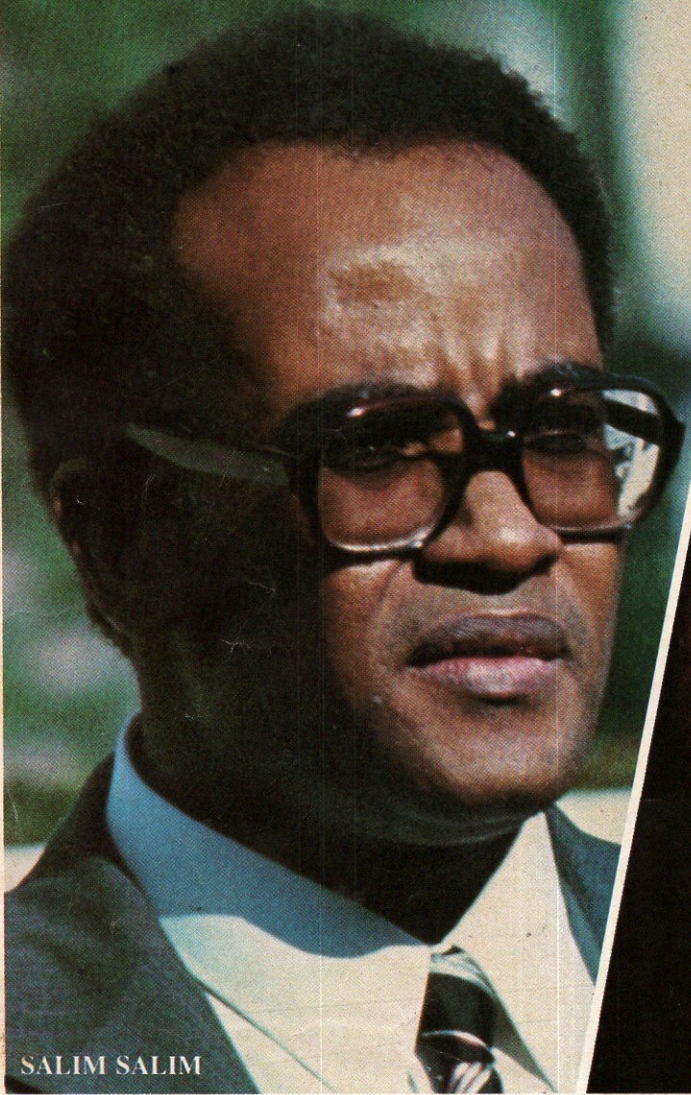
Central America:
The Vietnam syndrome

Iran: Banking
goes Islamic

Chile: Trick or treat

Orientalism: Eastern
encounter

Tanzania's new man



SALIM SALIM

Qadhafi misfires



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AFRICA

Guarding democracy

Tanzania The Minister's office was buzzing with news of the coup d'état in Guinea. What did Foreign Minister Salim A Salim, think of the coup?

Every military takeover constituted a setback to the democratic process, Salim said. He would not defend Sekou Touré's record; that was for the Guineans to judge. But there was no doubt that Sekou Touré had made a significant contribution to the struggle for African freedom. "In Conakry, nobody expected this turn of events."

Guinea was the 22nd country in Africa to come under military rule. Would the OAU consider excluding coup leaders as members to discourage the trend? It would be difficult for the OAU to take up such a position, Salim thought. It could have been done when the first civilian government was toppled by the army. Now, the tragedy was that it was very easy for the army to supplant a civilian government. Most African countries were small and a few ambitious officers could easily conspire to overthrow a civilian government. Once the democratic set-up was subverted, army officers succeeded each other and the process became endless, with many civilian casualties.

The only way to prevent the army from intervening in civilian affairs was to strengthen democratic institutions, Salim said. In many countries these institutions were still fragile.

He said that the engineers of successful military plots always gave the same reasons. They proclaimed their resolve to restore democracy and the rule of law as soon as they had cleansed the society of corruption and inefficiency, but the cleansing operation was turned into an endless exercise. The army always acted in the name of democracy by flouting democratic principle.

Tanzania had tried within human limits to create a participatory democracy where every segment of the population was important and every segment had a stake in the system, he said. The army in Tanzania had as much stake as any civilian in the democratic process. But Salim would not say with certainty that no-one in the army would try to do something.

Did he understand the reasons for Angola and Mozambique to enter into agreements with South Africa?

He thought Mozambique's intentions to be diametrically opposed to those of South

A few days after an interview with *South* Editor-in-Chief **Altat Gauhar**, Salim A Salim became Prime Minister of Tanzania. He was then Foreign Minister, little known outside East Africa and remembered in some diplomatic quarters for leading an African dance in the humourless aisles of the UN General Assembly. Salim is a Muslim from Pemba Island to the north of Zanzibar and the mainland, but he is thought to be in the political centre of both – and therefore may be able to reduce tension. His rise to the leadership gives his remarks in the interview added significance, since they reveal his views on the region and Tanzania's international links.

The Salim interview was followed by a meeting with Prime Minister Edward Moringe Sokoine shortly before his death in a road accident. His forceful and frank replies to many questions give a searching insight into Tanzania's problems.



Salim Salim . . . everyone has a stake

Africa. Pretoria was euphoric because it hoped to use the agreements to stifle the struggle for self-determination by undermining the African National Congress.

Mozambique had been subjected to aggression and the agreement would limit the damage. It was true that the ANC had been weakened by the agreement, but its ability to operate in South Africa was not entirely dependent on any one of the Frontline states.

The Mozambicans had briefed Tanzania and the other Frontline states. But the agreement was Mozambique's alone. The ANC regarded it as a temporary setback but ANC president Oliver Tambo had made it clear that the struggle would continue. The challenge facing the Frontline states was to devise an appropriate strategy to meet the new situation.

The Angolan agreement had to be seen in a totally different context, Salim said.

South Africa was physically occupying southern Angola. If the agreement were implemented, South African forces would withdraw from Angola, which would be a

step in the right direction – but it did not solve the Namibian problem.

How did he see the response of the world community to the economic problems and needs of Tanzania?

Every time there was turbulence in East-West relations, Third World countries, Tanzania among them, got the shivers, Salim said. Some countries understood Tanzania's problem and had responded to her needs – the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, and Canada – but international institutions, particularly the IMF, had not shown appropriate sensitivity. The IMF believed that Tanzania's problems could be resolved by applying stereotype textbook formulas irrespective of the social, political and economic conditions of the country. If Tanzania were to undertake a massive devaluation of its currency, it would be a prescription for social and political catastrophe.

"Tanzania is trying to reach an agreement with the IMF. The agreement is important for Tanzania and the government has been very flexible in its approach. It has moved even on the question of foreign exchange adjustment. The question of devaluation is being discussed, but so far the IMF has not demonstrated sufficient sensitivity to Tanzania's problem." Tanzania was poor and was not in a position to exert the kind of pressure some other countries had been able to exercise to their advantage. "To be frank, Tanzania is not happy with the approach and attitude of the IMF."

Salim likes to believe that the IMF is bound by its rules rather than think there are political reasons for its intransigence. The IMF was not supposed to be ideologically oriented, but committed to its set of values. However, there was growing evidence that the US was becoming disillusioned with multilateral institutions. There was a growing belief that the US could get better value for its money through bilateral arrangements. The US notice of withdrawal from Unesco at the end of 1984 was a part of the new spirit of bilateralism.

Salim saw the move toward bilateralism as a frightening development. It undermined the effectiveness of international institutions and it violated the spirit of a stable international order. The threats against Unesco were self-serving. Unesco was being attacked not for its management policies but because there were people who wanted the Director-General, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow removed.

M'Bow had been a faithful advocate of the interests of the world community. For any member state to say that Unesco was good only as long as it served its national interests and not the interests of the community as a whole, amounted to an assault on the fabric of international cooperation. If this trend continued, the effectiveness of all existing international institutions would be destroyed. □