

TRANSCRIPT

of an exclusive Inter Dependent interview

with

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to the United Nations

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The Inter Dependent: It's widely felt in the US Congress that the recent elections in Rhodesia are as fair or fairer than some elections in many developing countries. By condemning the elections in Rhodesia, are you not asking that country to meet democratic standards that are not met in many parts of Africa and the world?

Salim: Well, first I think there are two things that one has to get very clear, and those are the nature of the elections and what the elections were all for. In condemning the elections, the position which we are taking, we are condemning the purpose of these elections, we are condemning the Constitution which has given rise to these elections, an illegal Constitution which would have the perpetuation of the status quo in terms of white control over the country, of the army, of the air force, of the police, of the civil service, of the judiciary; in other words, a Constitution which appears to give the trappings of power to the majority while in actuality the substance of power is in the hands of the minority regime.

Now, frankly, the fairness of the election is a matter of one's interpretation. If you can call an election which is held in conditions of martial law, in conditions where the regime requires

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Africans, because of the excessive mobilization that took place in Rhodesia. You had something like 100,000 troops protecting and guarding the so-called elections and forcing people into elections. And when I say forcing people, I haven't been to Rhodesia, but there are those who have been in Rhodesia --I mean, after all, the evidence as to the elections in Rhodesia has been a varied type of evidence. There have been some people in England who have come out and said categorically that the elections, people were forced to go to the elections, through intimidation, through exercises like You will lose your job, You will lose that, You will lose the other. Now, the Patriotic Front had a choice: either to create maximum difficulties for the Africans, the very Africans on which the Patriotic Front depends for support, or to allow this process to go on, on the clear understanding that the war will continue. I think what would determine the extent of the popularity and support of the Patriotic Front is more what happens in the next few weeks ~~than~~ <sup>than</sup> in the next few months. And I'm convinced that this will not change the situation any.

ID: Is there any reason to think that a government set up by the Patriotic Front would be more responsive to the will of the majority than the present Government? Mr. Mugabe, for example, has said that he favors a one-party Marxist state for Rhodesia; why would that be any more democratic?

Salim: Frankly, I must be very candid on this, when we oppose the present Government, we are opposing the institutions that are built to ensure the perpetuation of the minority. We are not saying there-



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fore automatically that the government of the Patriotic Front would be a better government. We are saying that conditions which can be created in Zimbabwe which may result in the government of the Patriotic Front will definitely be better conditions in terms of effectively transferring power to the people. And in terms of what type of system or what type of government either the Patriotic Front under the leadership of Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe or for that matter even Mr. Muzorewa would have, that is a matter for the Rhodesians themselves. That is why, for example, we have always consistently supported the Anglo-American proposal. Why did we support the Anglo-American proposal? We supported the Anglo-American proposal as the basis for negotiation because it provided for conditions for the holding of elections in conditions which would be fair and [in] which the people of Rhodesia itself would really freely and genuinely elect their own leaders. In such conditions, if they chose Mr. Muzorewa or chose Mr. Nkomo or they chose Mr. Mugabe, that we can say is what the people of Zimbabwe want. And those are the institutions which you want to see created.

ID: In other words then, you are convinced that any black-dominated government would be better than the present one?

Salim: No. I am convinced that any government, whether it is black-dominated or white-dominated for that matter--I mean let's not talk about black domination and white domination, the issue is not whether there is white domination or black domination, the issue here is that in a country, in a society where the majority of people are Africans, where you have something like 6 million Africans and 250,000 whites,

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you cannot have a government which has inherently conditions for the perpetuation of the minority and call that government fair. So any other government whose institutions and whose conditions are so created as to represent the overwhelming majority of the people would be a better government.

Now whether that government is going to comprise, among others, whites, or comprise, among others, this, that would be a matter for the Zimbabweans to decide. But the present Constitution, the present setup where the minority is in control of the army, the civil service, the judiciary, the overall setup of the society and is guaranteed by the present Constitution to continue with that situation for the next ten years, and the other ten years are situation, that type of government cannot be a fair government. And anything which will change this situation would definitely be a better government and more representative of the Africans, and the people of Zimbabwe as a whole.

ID: How do you account for the growing support in the US Congress for the internal settlement?

Salim: Well I would say, frankly, I can only say it is an unfortunate development. Part of it, I think, is based on the lack of knowledge of the realities of the Zimbabwe situation, which is unfortunate, because the support by Congress today...supposing Congress were to take what we consider to be the unthinkable--moves to lift sanctions in Rhodesia. What would be the effect of this? The effect of this would really be to make the situation in Zimbabwe more complex, to make the war in Zimbabwe more serious and to put



the United States effectively on the side of the minority regime in Rhodesia. In other words, to go back to the status quo <sup>ante</sup> until the collapse of Portuguese colonialism.

What has happened in the last few years, since the Carter Administration came to power, has been been that there has at least been this hope that for once the American Administration, instead of finding itself siding always with the minority regimes in southern Africa, is beginning to take positions which may find itself more palatable with the growing trend of African freedom in southern Africa. If the United States were today to take a position which effectively means really supporting the internal situation, which means really supporting Smith, because frankly the present arrangements, the present setup, where the constitutional provisions and the real authority remain in the hands of the minority, such support of the Government is really support of Mr. Smith. Now that type of support would only lead us to a situation of confrontation with the United States, would only put the United States in the position in which they had put themselves when they were supporting Portuguese colonialism in Africa.

So, to the extent that it will make the struggle more bitter, that will be very unfortunate; to the extent that it will make the United States more identified with the minority regimes, that it will the situation very bad for African-American relations. But to the extent that the nature of the struggle in Zimbabwe will not change -- if Congress believes that by lifting sanctions it would end the war in Rhodesia, then I'm sorry to say that they do not know the reality of Rhodesia.

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ID: Some have argued that lifting sanctions would invite a bigger role for Cubans and the possible involvement of other outsiders, such as East Germans, in a Rhodesian civil war. Is that a possibility in your view?

Salim: I'll put it to you this way. Until now, despite all the shortcomings of the Anglo-American proposal and the initiatives of the British and the Americans, there was still a possibility that somehow, given the goodwill of all the parties concerned, and given a determination on the part of the British and Americans and the political determination which has not been seriously there, officially there, I mean, then there's a possibility of getting a negotiated solution.

When the United States takes a position of siding with Mr. Smith, then that possibility becomes effectively out. When that situation happens, then the only option for the resolution of the Zimbabwe conflict becomes the armed confrontation to the finish. In an armed confrontation, where can the freedom fighters get their arms? They can only get them from the sources which have always been willing and prepared to support them in the past; that is, the socialist countries. In that type of situation, for the United States again to start complaining that either the Cubans or the Soviets or a combination of others are supporting the liberation movement is really to deliberately ignore the basic consequences of their own actions.

ID: If the economic sanctions were lifted, would the front-line states request more military aid from the socialist countries?



Salim: Logically. The liberation movements will request more aid. In any case, the liberation movements will have to request more aid. And clearly, when the option of negotiations is <sup>totally</sup> ruled out, the only option that is left is an option of confrontation.

ID: Would more Cuban troops be requested as well?

Salim: No. In the case of the Zimbabwe situation, the liberation movement in Zimbabwe, the Patriotic Front, has never, has never said they are going to request <sup>Cubans</sup> or anybody else to fight their war for them. In fact, one of the important developments of the Zimbabwe situation, and this is very little known or little publicized, is that it is never a problem to get Zimbabweans who are prepared to fight for their freedom. Zimbabweans in the thousands are volunteering to be trained. So there is no shortage of manpower, no shortage of freedom fighters willing to make the necessary sacrifices. But the shortage has been in the field of arms and the field of material assistance. And in the Zimbabwe situation, the liberation movement has never said that they are going to ask anybody to fight for them. So the question of Cuban participation, active participation in the war, has never been a question that has ever been addressed by the liberation movement.

ID: To not lift the sanctions, Bishop Muzorewa said recently, would simply force his Government to solicit more support from South Africa. Do you think <sup>that</sup> continuing the sanctions risks driving Rhodesia into an alliance with South Africa?

Salim: The truth of the situation is, the existence of the Muzorewa Government, like the existence of the Smith Government, has depended and will continue to depend on South Africa. So in a sense to say that you are going to force them into South African hands, the very institutions that have been created now in Southern Rhodesia are the institutions Mr. Smith would like to see. And by virtue of those situations, the alliance between the Government in Rhodesia and the Government in South Africa seems to be a natural alliance. And frankly, this question of saying that they are going to force them into South African hands is a non-starter. And beyond that, the South African position has always been to support Rhodesia in one form or another. And the mere fact that the South Africans are anxious to support this Government clearly demonstrates the nature of the institutions that have been created in the country.

But I should say frankly, I want to stress this point, that as far as we are concerned, the issue is not a Muzorewa, the issue is not a Sithole, the issue is not a Nkomo, the issue is not a Mugabe. The issue is the institutions which are being created in Rhodesia. The issue is that we cannot allow ourselves to be put in a situation of giving legitimacy to the continuation and perpetuation of oppressive and repressive rule in Rhodesia, depriving the Africans of their rightful position in the area by giving some sort of subterfuge and some sort of appearance of transfer of power in the country.

If Muzorewa were to be elected tomorrow in a constitution which really effectively transferred power to the people of Rhodesia under conditions where the international community either through the United Nations or through other mechanisms is genuinely convinced



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that these have been genuine elections and there has been an effective transfer of power, you will not find anybody quarreling about a Muzorewa presidency. So the issue is not Muzorewa, that people will either like or don't like Muzorewa. The issue is what type of arrangements we are sanctifying in Rhodesia.

ID: Is the Anglo-American plan still alive?

Salim: The Anglo-American plan is not alive because the authors of the plan have not kept it alive as such. The Anglo-American plan, one of the basic assumptions of the Anglo-American plan was that Smith would voluntarily resign the power. And the history of this plan has clearly demonstrated that Smith was in no position to *give up* the power, and in fact he gave his own reply to the Anglo-American proposal, and that is the internal solution. And neither the Americans nor the British have been in an effective [enough] position to put the necessary pressure to realize the implementation of the basic provision of their own plan. So to the extent that the plan's authors are not very enthusiastic about implementing their own plan, it's academic to talk about the Anglo-American plan. right now.

ID: What are the prospects now, if any, for a nonviolent resolution of the Rhodesian conflict?

Salim: Well, to begin with, you cannot really talk of a nonviolent resolution because you cannot talk of nonviolence in the midst of

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violence. There is a violent confrontation going on in Rhodesia. But, quite frankly, I must be very candid and say that increasingly the prospects for a negotiated resolution of the Zimbabwe situation are becoming bleak. And the attitude to be adopted by the Western countries, and more specifically by the United States and Britain, vis-à-vis the question of sanctions, vis-à-vis the question of the recognition of the so-called internal solution, will also determine whether even the minute possibilities are there.

If the British and the Americans and the rest of the international community refuse to be put in the position of legitimizing a wholly illegitimate situation, then one can still say that, well, the international community as a whole and the British Government in particular as the administering power in Rhodesia, as the colonial power in Rhodesia, can still come out with some initiatives which can, perhaps, have the possibilities of meriting serious consideration by the parties concerned.

ID: Do you expect the Thatcher Government to take a very different line on Rhodesia? Some reports say that her Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington has similar views on the question of Rhodesia to those of his predecessor David Owen.

Salim: We would hope not, because whether it is a Labor Government or a Conservative Government, the fact remains it is a British Government which is internationally accountable for the situation in Rhodesia. If the British Government is seriously interested in reducing the level of violence, in trying to find a way out of the



Rhodesian situation, then it cannot proceed in a way which can only escalate violence. To lift sanctions, to give legitimacy to the internal solution would only be a prescription for <sup>further</sup> violence. We would hope that the British Government would continue to proceed in the path of the previous Government, but perhaps in an even more positive manner, by putting muscle into whatever proposal that they may come out with.

The problem with the previous situation with the Anglo-American proposal--and we all worked on this proposal, we have been involved in a lot of negotiations, and there are proposals, there is a document--but the implementation of this document has been very difficult because the authors have, were not prepared to apply the political muscle and the necessary muscle which we always thought they have and they could apply to the Rhodesian regime.

ID: What more could they have done?

Salim: Well, for one thing, the enforcement, the extension of the sanctions over and above those provisions which are there, and I know this was difficult then and is going to be even more difficult now, but more importantly to avoid an impression that you have your legs on both sides. On the one hand you're supporting the Anglo-American proposals, but on the other hand, well, if there's anything which can come out in Rhodesia, perhaps we'll try to give it encouragement. And that has been the basis of the problem of the Anglo-American proposal: that throughout, while articulating their proposals, they were not telling Mr. Smith, Look, these are the proposals which will resolve the problem. And Smith cannot really,

in all frankness, defy the determined will of both the United States and the United Kingdom. But the question is, has there been that determined and unequivocal will? And that is the question which I think many of us doubt.

ID: US Ambassador Andrew Young argues that the best way to guarantee racial progress in southern Africa is to combine measures like economic sanctions with persuasion, the assumption being that white minority leaders in the region can be persuaded that such progress is in their best interest. Yet you seem to feel that neither Ian Smith nor the white South African leadership can be trusted. Is the Anglo-American plan based on a naive premise then?

Salim: Well, there are two questions there. I'll answer the last question which is very straightforward: The problem with the Anglo-American plan essentially has been this assumption that Smith would voluntarily resign power. When we supported the Anglo-American plan as a basis for a settlement, when we worked together with the British and the Americans to try and get some agreement on the basic provisions and when the Patriotic Front cooperated with the British and the Americans in the meeting in Dar es Salaam which led to the Patriotic Front accepting the major provision of the Anglo-American plan, it was still with the assumption that Smith would also be made to agree to this plan, that Smith would resign the power.

Now, from the very beginning of the plan we said, Look, but supposing Smith does not resign the power; we were made to believe



that Smith will resign the power. Now that was the major fallacy of the Anglo-American plan.

Coming back to this question of Ambassador Young's position of combining sanctions with persuasion. Frankly, I do not think that it is a right prescription for the situation in South Africa. The idea of talking sense into the South African white leadership has proved conclusively that it is a non-starter. Okay, let's take one specific example: In the last two-and-a-half years the five Western governments have been involved in the negotiations over the question of Namibia. They have got our support. The front-line states solidly supported the Western governments. The United Nations came out in support of the Western position. SWAPO came out and supported the Western position. We now have a situation where everybody is agreed on the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's plan--except the South Africans. What happened to the arguments of persuasion? What can the Western governments now say to SWAPO, what can they say to the African states who have supported them? And we have been made to believe that this is the path of negotiation, the path of reason--the South African authorities desire changes, desire peaceful changes? And we are saying, therefore, this is Namibia; Namibia is not South Africa. In respect to South Africa also, it has been clearly demonstrated that the South African regime will not change of its own volition. They can only make some cosmetic changes in apartheid, but when the chips are down they would want to maintain their domination and the instruments of repression as they are, unless the combined pressure of the international community can force some changes on them. So I think the premise of moral suasion has proved to be a premise based on false assumptions.

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ID: On another matter, it's been said that your Government, the Government of Tanzania, by sending troops into Uganda to topple the regime of President Amin, has breached a sacred maxim of the Organization of African Unity of not interfering in the internal affairs of another country. Do you agree that Tanzania has set a dangerous precedent for the rest of Africa?

Salim: No. I think that all those who are critical, it's not fair to say "critical" because even those who raise this argument have not necessarily criticized Tanzania, but I think the argument, frankly, is distorted. Why is it distorted? Tanzania did not send its troops into Uganda for the purpose of toppling Mr. Amin. One has got to go back into the history of this question. Who was it that initiated this conflict? When you talk of precedents, the first and foremost precedent is the unprecedented situation that Tanzania was faced with; we had no conflict with Uganda. People talk about conflicts; there have been some differences between Ethiopia and Somalia, but you have to say one thing about the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict and that is historically there has always been this position--the Somalis from the time of their independence took a position that the people of the Ogaden have a right to self-determination and so on. Now you may agree or disagree with the Somali position, but there has been a conflict between the Ethiopians and the Somalis. Now it happens that most of the African countries do not agree with any claims which tend to change and violate the sanctity of existing frontiers. We take that position also.



...I'm saying that there was this dispute which people know about. You mention any episode in Africa, any conflict situation, you will never see the parallel with the Tanzanian-Ugandan situation. What did we have in this context? We had a situation where one day the Field Marshal [Amin] simply decided to go into Tanzanian territory, occupied 710 square kilometers of our area, boasted about this occupation, told everybody that he had annexed Tanzanian territory, committed looting, rampage, murder, pillage and raping of our women, committed the most obscene things that you can think of, and for two weeks he was occupying Tanzanian territory. And in this two weeks, what was Tanzania supposed to do? Tanzania did what any African country or any other country in the world would do. In other words, mobilize its forces, create the conditions to uproot the aggressors; but not simply to uproot the aggressors--to make sure that there will never be a repetition or a recurrence of such acts of aggression.

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Now in the context of the war that went on...I mean, one thing must be remembered: throughout this conflict Tanzania made very minimum demands. We said we were prepared to end the conflict tomorrow if a) Amin renounces his claim over the Kagera, something Amin never did, and b) if the principle of compensation for the damage and destruction and the murder that had been done to our people. Amin never accepted this principle.

So really when you talk of precedent, the precedent which the Tanzania-Uganda conflict had created is one important precedent, and that is it is extremely important for African states to scrupulously respect the sanctity of existing frontiers. It's extremely important for African states not to cross other countries' frontiers and commit aggression, because when you commit aggression you cannot dictate to the victim of aggression to what extent he should fight to resist your aggression. I think this is the only precedent we have created.

ID: Once your troops had driven the Ugandans from Tanzanian soil, what was the purpose of driving on to the Ugandan capital?

Salim: War has no boundaries. The war between Tanzania and Uganda never ended. Amin continued to make his threats. The fact remains that even after the last moment, before the collapse of Kampala, Amin was still saying in terms of he will teach Tanzania a lesson. In other words, you have a situation where the aggressor continues to claim that he is going to fulfill his aggression. And in that situation, you talk of any war situation, I mean we can go back to the history of the Second World War. I think that is the most relevant



analogy. When the combined forces and the Hitler forces, the Soviet Union, the United States, the British, the French, after fighting this war for so many years and ultimately coming onto the borders of Germany, why is it that the Allies thought that they should have gone up to the point of defeating the German military machine as such? Why couldn't they stop at the borders of Germany? It would have been more logical; after all, the Germans had occupied other countries. For as long as the aggressor has not reneged from his aggression, the war continues; and in a war situation, the war continues either after Tanzania's defeat or after Uganda's defeat.

There's another dimension also. Two other factors in this situation. The one factor is that the parallel to the Tanzanian-Ugandan war there was also the Ugandans' war, themselves, the people of Uganda who revolted against Amin. I mean, this is a point which is not to be forgotten, that the people of Uganda rose against the Field Marshal, making use of the war between Uganda and Tanzania; they had the possibilities which they never had before and they exploited these possibilities to the maximum. The Ugandan resistance movement, which also fought. And that was the resistance which the Tanzanians could not control.

Then of course there was the question of the threat for the Tanzanian security which was made following Libya's ultimatum and Libya's escalation of the conflict in Uganda.

ID: Tanzania did not bring its complaint against Uganda to the other Security Council, just as disputes involving black African states, such as Somalia-Ethiopia, have not been brought there. Yet the

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African group regularly brings to the Security Council its complaints against white-ruled regimes in southern Africa. Why is there this selectivity?

Salim: This is in keeping with the Charter provisions of the UN. The Charter has always taken the position that where the regional organizations can play a role to resolve the problem, the regional organizations should be encouraged. And from the point of view of African states, it has always been a tradition that African problems should as far as possible be resolved within the context of the Organization of African Unity.

Now, Tanzania did not bring the question to the Security Council even when Uganda had occupied Tanzania for two weeks for one simple reason: it is out of respect for this African tradition. We did bring the matter to the attention of the OAU, and the Chairman of the OAU was apprised of the situation, and he was trying to handle it in the way in which he tried to handle it, and the OAU secretariat was apprised of this matter, and ultimately, as you know, the OAU mediation commission tried to resolve this problem. So the OAU was seized with this problem, and that's why the United Nations Security Council was not seized. This is why the Tanzanians did not bring it to the Security Council.

ID: Long after reports had reached the West that Amin's regime was responsible for massive human rights violations, there was little condemnation of those violations by other African states. Why was that?



Salim: I don't think you can generalize about that. There have been African states who have criticized Amin's violations of human rights, inasmuch as there have been others who have kept quiet. There have been others who have been critical, and those who have not been critical have taken the position, have perhaps taken positions privately with the Government or for whatever reasons. But I can tell you, as far as Tanzania's position is concerned, we've always adopted a critical position on the violation of human rights in Uganda. We've always taken the position that such violations were not only a denial of the humanity of Uganda, but that it was very detrimental to the interest of the Africans, particularly in the southern African situation, because it was providing the enemies of African freedom an opportunity and a pretext to rationalize their own situation which was beyond rationalization.

But now that you ask me this question, I would also say that in spite of our total opposition to Amin's atrocities in Uganda, and his atrocities are known--only one who wanted to behave like an ostrich would have said that nothing was happening in Uganda--we did not think it was up to us to change the situation in Uganda. And I want to stress this point, frankly, that we would have shed no tears whatsoever if Amin had been overthrown at any time in the last eight years. It's not a secret; we had made our opposition to Amin's Government abundantly clear. But at the same time and by the same token, it was not the business of the Tanzanians to change the Government in Uganda. When therefore we had to fight Amin, we fought him because he had directly attacked Tanzania. We fought Amin essentially for Tanzanian reasons; we fought Amin, inasmuch as we had our own sympathy for the plight of Ugandans, that is not the

reason why we fought Amin. We fought Amin because Amin committed aggression against Tanzania. We fought Amin because he threatened the security of Tanzania. We fought Amin because Amin juxtaposed what he was doing to Ugandans and to the Tanzanians at Kagera. This was the reason why we fought Amin, and this was why we had to go to war. And for as long as our security was threatened, that is why the war had to continue.

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