

News Analysis.....Hugh Scotland.

African To Head General Assembly

Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations during the last nine years, and also Ambassador to Ghana, High Commissioner to Guyana, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, becomes the third African (South of the Sahara) in the thirty-four year history of the United Nations to be elected President of the UN General Assembly.

Born on 23rd January, 1942, he was educated at Lumumba College, the University of Delhi and the School of International Affairs of Columbia University. Early in his political career he was Deputy Chief Representative of the Zanzibar Office, in Havana, and was active in his country's independence movement. Salim later served as Ambassador to the United Arab Republic, 1964, High Commissioner to India, 1965, and followed later as Director of the African and Middle East Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1968. Before coming to the United Nations he had served as Ambassador to the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

While at the UN he became the Chairman of the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, in 1972, a position he still holds, after having led many colonial territories to independence. And when his country was elected to a seat on the Security Council for a two-year period, Ambassador Salim A. Salim led his delegation, and indeed, represented the Third World and Non-Aligned countries, together with his other colleagues, and this earned him the highest praises of his colleagues. This led Ambassador Ivor Richards of the United Kingdom to speak of Salim as "one of the most powerful Africans at the United Nations."

Salim is the first son of eighteen children (eleven boys and seven girls) and he often affectionately refers to the size of his family as "the typical African family." He continued, "Because of the size of my family I had to help in the education of my sisters and brothers from my early youth." Yet, Mr. Salim, himself, has only two children: a daughter, Miriam, 13, and a son, Ali, 12. However, at 37, the size of the "typical African family" has not yet escaped him and should not be beyond his capabilities for a man of great achievements. At 34, he was strongly tipped to be in the race of contestants for the Secretary-Generalship of the United Nations. But it seemed



Salim Ahmed Salim

then that his age stood in the way.

Only a week ago he was asked at a press conference if he would eventually consider running for the post of the Secretary General. Salim replied, "We have a Secretary General of the United Nations. In my opinion, my frank opinion, he is doing a superb job in an extremely difficult situation. I think we must not add to the burden of his responsibility by indulging in idle speculation. The responsibility of the office of the Secretary General is such that I really think what the International Community must do is support the incumbent effectively for as long as he is in office."

In his inaugural speech, the Tanzanian Ambassador said, "Today is not the darkest hour of mankind nor is it a sunny day. For it is still one of the unpleasant facts that millions of the world population continue to live in economic misery and other deprivations; many others, especially Africa, the Middle East

and Asia, are suffering from the humiliation of being a subject people under colonialism, racism, and other forms of domination and indignities."

Mr. Salim cited "the monumental poverty of two-thirds of the world's people, the widespread deprivation of political and human rights, the escalating arms race and the refusal to respect the sovereignty of others including their sovereignty over the national resources."

Referring to violations of human rights, he said that nowhere had they taken "such a massive and grotesque form as in Southern Africa." But whether in Africa or elsewhere, he said, oppressed peoples were resisting, by means including armed struggles as a last resort. And it was only logical that many Member States supported the struggle against systems and regimes practising colonialism, foreign occupation and apartheid (racial separation).

The Assembly President said,

"The pernicious system of apartheid and its brutal instruments of repression and oppression of the African people continue to reign supreme. The continued illegal occupation of Namibia (South West Africa) by the South African regime, in defiance of international law and the will of the international community, and in total obstruction of the United Nations' plan for the independence of that territory; and of course, the deteriorating and uncertain situation in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) are all clear manifestations of the shortcomings that face our organizations (UN) in our collective search for freedom and human dignity."

On the question of the Middle East the President said, "The situation remains fluid and complex. Recent developments have given birth to new realities and also new problems which have to be reckoned with while the international community endeavors to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict. It must however be stressed that peace in the Middle East will continue to elude the area if the root cause of the conflict is not taken fully into account. The core of the Middle East problem is the continued denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state."

"The realization of that right, the refusal to give legitimacy to the fruits of conquest, the respect of the right of all states, in the area, to an independent existence, are conditions necessary for the attainment of a genuine, viable and permanent peace in the region. The role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the representative of the Palestinian people, is pivotal."

Mr. Salim was asked at a subsequent press conference whether he would be prepared to request the PLO to accept Israel's existence. He replied that he was quite prepared to ask the PLO to accept the fact of Israel, but that he had to be equally prepared to ask the Israelis to accept the fact of the PLO. He said that real peace would remain elusive unless the United Nations addressed itself to the root causes of conflicts.

Ambassador Salim called upon Member States to do more to stem the tide of refugees and alleviate their condition; to call for measures to halt and reverse the arms race; and stressed that