OMNI Dag Hammarskjöld NEWSLETTER #1, OCTOBER 19, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology.

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Dag Hammarskjöld

Dag Hammarskjold.jpg

Secretary-General of the United Nations

In office
10 April 1953 – 18 September 1961

Preceded by

Trygve Lie

Succeeded by

U Thant

Personal details

Born
Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld
29 July 1905
Jönköping, Sweden

Died

18 September 1961 (aged 56)
Ndola, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

Nationality

Swedish

Religion

Lutheran/Church of Sweden

Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld (Swedish: [dɑːɡ ˈhamːarʃœld] (listen); 29 July 1905 – 18 September 1961) was a Swedish diplomat, economist, and author. The second Secretary-General of the United Nations, he served from April 1953 until his death in a plane crash in September 1961. He is among three other people to be awarded a posthumous Nobel Prize.[1] Hammarskjöld remains the only U.N. Secretary-General to die in office, and his death occurred en route to cease-fire negotiations. American President John F. Kennedy called Hammarskjöld "the greatest statesman of our century".[2] Contents

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Hammarskjöld's birth house

Dag Hammarskjöld was born in Jönköping, Sweden, but spent most of his childhood in Uppsala. The fourth and youngest son of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, Prime Minister of Sweden from 1914 to 1917, and Agnes Hammarskjöld (née Almquist), Hammarskjöld's ancestors served the Monarchy of Sweden since the 17th century. He studied first at Katedralskolan and then at Uppsala University. By 1930, he had obtained Licentiate of Philosophy and Master of Laws degrees. Even before he was finished with his law degree he got a job as assistant secretary of the unemployment committee.[3]

From 1930 to 1934, Hammarskjöld was Secretary on a governmental committee on unemployment. During this time he wrote his economics thesis, "Konjunkturspridningen" ("The Spread of the Business Cycle"), and received a doctorate from Stockholm University.[3] In 1936, he became a Secretary at the Sveriges Riksbank and was soon promoted. From 1941 to 1948, he served as Chairman of the bank.


He helped coordinate government plans to alleviate the economic problems of the post-war period. He was a delegate to the Paris conference that established the Marshall Plan. In 1950, he became head of the Swedish delegation to UNISCAN. Although Hammarskjöld served in a cabinet dominated by the Social Democrats, he never officially joined any political party. In 1951, Hammarskjöld became Vice Chairman of the Swedish delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris. He became the Chairman of the Swedish delegation to the General Assembly in New York in 1952. On 20 December 1954, he was elected to take his father's vacated seat in the Swedish Academy.

UN Secretary-General[edit source | editbeta]

When Trygve Lie resigned from his post as UN Secretary-General in 1953, the United Nations Security Council recommended Hammarskjöld for the post. It came as a surprise to him.[4] Seen as a competent technocrat without political views, he was selected on 31 March by a majority of 10 out of eleven Security Council members. The UN General Assembly elected him in the 7–10 April session by 57
votes out of 60. In 1957, he was re-elected.

Hammarskjöld began his term by establishing his own secretariat of 4,000 administrators and setting up regulations that defined their responsibilities. He was also actively engaged in smaller projects relating to the UN working environment. For example, he planned and supervised in every detail the creation of a "meditation room" in the UN headquarters. This is a place dedicated to silence where people can withdraw into themselves, regardless of their faith, creed, or religion.[5]

During his term, Hammarskjöld tried to smooth relations between Israel and the Arab states. Other highlights include a 1955 visit to China to negotiate release of 15 captured US pilots who had served in the Korean War, the 1956 establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force, and his intervention in the 1956 Suez Crisis. He is given credit by some historians for allowing participation of the Holy See within the United Nations that year.[6]

In 1960, the former Belgian Congo and then newly independent Congo asked for UN aid in defusing the Congo Crisis. Hammarskjöld made four trips to the Congo. His efforts towards the decolonisation of Africa were considered insufficient by the Soviet Union; in September 1960, the Soviet government denounced his decision to send a UN emergency force to keep the peace. They demanded his resignation and the replacement of the office of Secretary-General by a three-man directorate with a built-in veto, the "troika". The objective was, citing the memoirs of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, to “equally represent interests of three groups of countries: capitalist, socialist and recently independent.”[7][8]

Death[edit source | editbeta]

In September 1961, Hammarskjöld learned about fighting between "non-combatant" UN forces and Katangesetroops of Moise Tshombe. He was en route to negotiate a cease-fire on 18 September when his Douglas DC-6 airliner SE-BDY crashed near Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Hammarskjöld and fifteen others perished in the crash.

A special report issued by the United Nations following the crash stated that a bright flash in the sky was seen at approximately 1:00.[9] According to the UN special report, it was this information that resulted in the initiation of search and rescue operations. Initial indications that the crash might not have been an accident led to multiple official inquiries and persistent speculation that the Secretary-General was assassinated.[10]

Hammarskjöld's death was a memorable event. The Dag Hammarskjöld Crash Site Memorial is under consideration for inclusion as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A press release issued by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo stated that, "... in order to pay a tribute to this great man, now vanished from the scene, and to his colleagues, all of whom have fallen victim to the shameless intrigues of the great financial Powers of the West... the Government has decided to proclaim Tuesday, 19 September 1961, a day of national mourning."[9]

Official inquiry[edit source | editbeta]

Following the death of Hammarskjöld, there were three inquiries into the circumstances that led to the crash:[11] the Rhodesian Board of Investigation, the Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry, and the United
The Nations Commission of Investigation.


The three official inquiries failed to determine conclusively the cause of the crash that led to the death of Hammarskjöld. The Rhodesian Board of Investigation sent 180 men to search a six-square-kilometer area of the last sector of the aircraft's flight-path, looking for evidence as to the cause of the crash. No evidence of a bomb, surface-to-air missile, or hijacking was found. The official report stated that two of the dead Swedish bodyguards had suffered multiple bullet wounds. Medical examination, performed by the initial Rhodesian Board of Investigation and reported in the UN official report, indicated that the wounds were superficial, and that the bullets showed no signs of rifling. They concluded that the bullets exploded in the fire in close proximity to the bodyguards.[11] No other evidence of foul play was found in the wreckage of the aircraft.[12]

Previous accounts of a bright flash in the sky were dismissed as occurring too late in the evening to have caused the crash. The UN report speculated that these flashes may have been caused by secondary explosions after the crash. The sole survivor, Sergeant Harold Julien, indicated that there was a series of explosions that preceded the crash.[11][13] The official inquiry found that the statements of witnesses who talked with Julien before he died in hospital five days after the crash[14] were inconsistent.

The report states that there were numerous delays that violated the established search and rescue procedures. There were three separate delays: the first delayed the initial alarm of a possible plane in trouble; the second delayed the "distress" alarm, which indicates that communications with surrounding airports indicate that a missing plane has not landed elsewhere; the third delayed the eventual search and rescue operation and the discovery of the plane wreckage, just miles away. The medical examiners report was inconclusive; one report said that Hammarskjöld had died on impact; another stated that Hammarskjöld might have survived had rescue operations not been delayed.[11] The report also said that the chances of Sgt. Julien surviving the crash would have been "infinitely" better if the rescue operations had been hastened.[11]

Alternative theories[edit source | editbeta]

Despite the multiple official inquiries that failed to find evidence of assassination, some continue to believe that the death of Hammarskjöld was not an accident.[10]

At the time of Hammarskjöld's death, Western intelligence agencies were actively involved in the political situation in the Congo,[10] which culminated in Belgian and United States support for the secession of Katanga and the assassination of former prime minister Patrice Lumumba. Belgium and the United Kingdom had a vested interest in maintaining their control over much of the country's copper industry during the Congolese transition from colonialism to independence. Concerns about the nationalisation of the copper industry could have provided a financial incentive to remove either Lumumba or Hammarskjöld.[10]

The involvement of British officers in commanding the initial inquiries, which provided much of the
information about the condition of the plane and the examination of the bodies, has led some to suggest a conflict of interest.\[10][15] The official report dismissed a number of pieces of evidence that would have supported the view that Hammarskjöld was assassinated.\[11] Some of these dismissals have been controversial, such as the conclusion that bullet wounds could have been caused by bullets exploding in a fire. Expert tests have questioned this conclusion, arguing that exploding bullets could not break the surface of the skin.\[10][11] Major C. F. Westell, a ballistics authority, said, "I can certainly describe as sheer nonsense the statement that cartridges of machine guns or pistols detonated in a fire can penetrate a human body."\[16] He based his statement on a large scale experiment that had been done to determine if military fire brigades would be in danger working near munitions depots. Other Swedish experts conducted and filmed tests showing that bullets heated to the point of explosion nonetheless did not achieve sufficient velocity to penetrate their box container.\[16]

Sir Denis Wright, the then British ambassador to Ethiopia, in his annual report for 1961 establishes linkage of Hammarskjöld's death to British refusal to allow an Ethiopian military plane carrying troops destined to join the UN mission, landing at Entebbe and over-flying British-controlled Uganda to the Congo. Their refusal was only lifted after the death of the Secretary General. A Foreign Office official noting his comments on file, wrote affirming no "skeletons" in British cupboard and suggesting the Ambassador's comments should be removed from the final, official 'printed' version of the annual report.\[17][better source needed]

On 19 August 1998, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), stated that recently uncovered letters had implicated the British MI5, the American CIA, and then South African intelligence services in the crash.\[18] One TRC letter said that a bomb in the aircraft's wheel bay was set to detonate when the wheels came down for a landing. Tutu said that they were unable to investigate the truth of the letters or the allegations that South Africa or Western intelligence agencies played a role in the crash. The British Foreign Office suggested that they may have been created as Soviet misinformation or disinformation.\[19]

On 29 July 2005, Norwegian Major General Bjørn Egge gave an interview to the newspaper Aftenposten on the events surrounding Hammarskjöld's death. According to General Egge, who had been the first UN officer to see the body, Hammarskjöld had a hole in his forehead, and this hole was subsequently airbrushed from photos taken of the body. It appeared to Egge that Hammarskjöld had been thrown from the plane, and grass and leaves in his hands might indicate that he survived the crash – and that he had tried to scramble away from the wreckage. Egge does not claim directly that the wound was a gunshot wound.\[20]

In his speech to the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2009, Colonel Gaddafi called upon the Libyan president of UNGA, Ali Treki, to institute a UN investigation into the assassinations of Congolese prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, who was overthrown in 1960 and murdered the following year, and of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1961.\[21]

According to a dozen witnesses interviewed by Swedish aid worker Göran Björkdahl in the 2000s (decade), Hammarskjöld's plane was shot down by another aircraft. Björkdahl also reviewed previously unavailable archive documents and internal UN communications. He believes that there was an intentional shootdown for the benefit of mining companies like Union Minière.\[22][23][24] A US intelligence officer who was stationed at an electronic surveillance station in Cyprus stated that he heard a cockpit recording from Ndola. In the cockpit recording a pilot talks of closing in on the DC6 in which Hammarskjöld was traveling, guns are heard firing, and then the words "I've hit it".\[25]
Hammarskjöld posthumously received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961, having been nominated before his death.

Honorary degrees: The Carleton University in Ottawa (then called Carleton College)[26] awarded its first-ever honorary degree to Hammarskjöld in 1954 when it presented him with a Legum Doctor, honoris causa. The University has continued this tradition by conferring an honorary doctorate upon every subsequent Secretary General of the United Nations. He also held honorary degrees from Oxford University, England; in the United States from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, Amherst, Johns Hopkins, the University of California, and Ohio University; in Sweden, Uppsala University; and in Canada from McGill University as well as Carleton.[27]

On 6 April 2011, the Bank of Sweden announced that Hammarskjöld's image will be used on the 1000 kronor banknote, the highest-denomination banknote in Sweden.[28]

Legacy[edit source | editbeta]

John F. Kennedy: After Hammarskjöld's death, U.S. president John F. Kennedy regretted that he opposed the UN policy in the Congo and said: "I realise now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century.”[2]

Refusal to resign: One of Hammarskjöld's greatest moments was refusing to give in to Soviet pressure to resign. Dag Hammarskjöld: "It is very easy to bow to the wish of a big power. It is another matter to resist it. If it is the wish of those nations who see the organization their best protection in the present world, I shall do so again."[29]

In 2011 The Financial Times reported that Hammarskjöld has remained the benchmark against which later UN Secretary-Generals have been judged.[30]

Historians' views:

Historian Paul Kennedy hailed Hammarskjöld in his book The Parliament of Man as perhaps the greatest UN Secretary-General because of his ability to shape events, in contrast with his successors.

In contrast, the conservative popular historian Paul Johnson in A History of the Modern World from 1917 to the 1980s (1983) was highly critical of his judgment.

Libraries:

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, a part of the United Nations headquarters, was dedicated on 16 November 1961 in honour of the late Secretary-General.

Uppsala University:

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library in Uppsala

There is also a Dag Hammarskjöld Library at his alma mater, Uppsala University.
Buildings and rooms:

- Columbia University: The School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York has a Dag Hammarskjöld Lounge. The graduate school is dedicated to the principles of international peace and cooperation that Hammarskjöld embodied.

- Stanford University: Dag Hammarskjöld House on the Stanford University campus is a residence cooperative for undergraduate and graduate students with international backgrounds and interests at Stanford.[31]

- The Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations in Geneva, Switzerland has a room named after him.

- Dag Hammarskjöld Stadium is the main football stadium of Ndola, Zambia. Hammarskjold's ill-fated flight in 1961 crashed in the outskirts of Ndola.

Portrait medallion of the late UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, sculpted by Trickett Mercer of Canada in 2011–12

Streets:

- Dag Hammarskjölds Gade is a street in Aalborg, Denmark

- Dag Hammarskjölds Väg is one of the longest streets in Uppsala, Sweden. There are several other streets in Sweden sharing this name.

- Dag Hammarskjöld's Allé is a street in Copenhagen, Denmark.

- The headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) in Santiago, Chile lies on Avenida Dag Hammarskjöld.

- The headquarters of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation, GIZ), is on Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg in Eschborn, Germany.

- Dag Hammarskjöldlaan is a street in the town of Castricum, The Netherlands.

- Hammarskjöld Road is a road in the town of Harlow, UK.

- New York City: A Manhattan park near the United Nations headquarters is called the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, as are several of the surrounding office buildings.

Religious commemoration: He is also commemorated as a peacemaker in the Calendar of Saints of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on 18 September of each year.

Schools: A number of schools have been named after Hammarskjöld, including Hammarskjold Middle School in East Brunswick Township, New Jersey; Dag Hammarskjold Middle School in Wallingford, Connecticut; Dag Hammarskjold Elementary School in Parma, Ohio; Dag Hammarskjold Elementary (PS 254) in Brooklyn, New York; Dag Hammarskjold Elementary School in
Oakland (now an airport parking business) and Hammarskjöld High School in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

- Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation:

The Dag Hammarskjöld centre in Uppsala (housing the secretariat of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation)

In 1962, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation was created as Sweden's national memorial to Dag Hammarskjöld.[32]

- Memorial awards:

- Medal: On 22 July 1997, the U.N. Security Council in resolution 1121(1997) established the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal in recognition and commemoration of those who have lost their lives as a result of UN peacekeeping operations.[33]

- Prize in Peace and Conflict Studies: Colgate University annually awards a student the Dag Hammarskjöld Prize in Peace and Conflict Studies based on outstanding work in the program.[34]

- Medallion by the sculptor Harald Salomon issued in Denmark 1962 to help financing the Danish Foreign Aid Program.

1962 Medal Dag Hammarskjöld by the Danish sculptor Harald Salomon

- Postage Stamps: Many countries issued postage stamps commemorating Hammarskjöld. [35] The United Nations Postal Administration issued 5 and 15-cent stamps in 1962. They show the UN flag at half-mast and bear the simple inscription, "XVIII IX MCMLXI". The United States Hammarskjöld commemorative 4-cent value postage stamp, issued on 23 October 1962, was actually released twice. Famous for its misprint, the second issue is often referred to as the Dag Hammarskjöld invert.

Spirituality and Markings[edit source | editbeta]

In 1953, soon after his appointment as United Nations secretary general, Hammarskjöld was interviewed on radio by Edward R. Murrow. In this talk he declared: "But the explanation of how man should live a life of active social service in full harmony with himself as a member of the community of spirit, I found in the writings of those great medieval mystics [Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruysbroek] for whom 'self-surrender' had been the way to self-realization, and who in 'singleness of mind' and 'inwardness' had found strength to say yes to every demand which the needs of their neighbours made them face, and to say yes also to every fate life had in store for them when they followed the call of duty as they understood it."[36]

His only book, Vägmärken (Markings), was published in 1963. A collection of his diary reflections, the book starts in 1925, when he was 20 years old, and ends at his death in 1961.[37] This diary was found in his New York house, after his death, along with an undated letter addressed to then Swedish Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Leif Belfrage. In this letter, Dag writes, "These entries provide the only true 'profile' that can be drawn... If you find them worth publishing, you have my permission to do so". The foreword is written by W.H. Auden, a friend of Dag's.[38] Markings was described by a theologian, the late Henry P. Van Dusen, as "the noblest self-disclosure of spiritual
struggle and triumph, perhaps the greatest testament of personal faith written ... in the heat of professional life and amidst the most exacting responsibilities for world peace and order."[39] Hammarskjöld writes, for example, "We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. But what we put into it is ours. He who wills adventure will experience it – according to the measure of his courage. He who wills sacrifice will be sacrificed – according to the measure of his purity of heart."[40] Markings is characterised by Hammarskjöld's intermingling of prose and haiku poetry in a manner exemplified by the 17th-century Japanese poet Basho in his Narrow Roads to the Deep North.

[41] In his foreword to Markings, the English poet W. H. Auden quotes Hammarskjöld as stating "In our age, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."[42]

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commemorates the life of Hammarskjöld as a renewer of society on the anniversary of his death, 18 September.

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See also[edit source | editbeta]

Portal icon

United Nations portal

- Dag Hammarskjöld invert

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35. ^ Selection of stamps commemorating the life of Dag Hammarskjöld


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Wikimedia Commons has media related to: Dag Hammarskjöld

Wikiquote has a collection of quotations related to: Dag Hammarskjöld

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- Dag Hammarskjöld – biography, quotes, photos and videos
- UNSG Dag Hammarskjold Conference on 9–10 November 2011 at Peace Palace
- Video of Hammarskjöld's funeral in Pathe archive
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- About Dag Hammarskjöld (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation)
- United Nations Secretaries-General
- Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General at the official website of the UN
- Biography
- The Nobel Prize
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- Media briefing by Archbishop Desmond Tutu
- 18 September 1961 UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld is killed and BBC
- Audio of Dag Hammarskjold's response to Russian pressure From UPI Audio Archives

Cultural offices
Preceded by
Hjalmar Hammarskjöld

Swedish Academy,
Seat No.17
1954–1961

Succeeded by
Erik Lindegren

Diplomatic posts

Preceded by
Trygve Lie
Norway

United Nations Secretary-General
1953–1961

Succeeded by
U Thant
Burma

Laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize (1951–1975)
Secretaries-General of the League of Nations and the United Nations

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· ABOUT
BOOK REVIEW: Roger Lipsey’s 'Hammarskjöld: A Life'

Monday, August 26, 2013 - 20:14

BOOK REVIEW: Roger Lipsey’s 'Hammarskjöld: A Life'

Reviewed by Winslow Myers


Lipsey’s achievement is all the more remarkable because at first glance Hammarskjöld appears to be, in the combination of his monastic bachelor dedication to his role and his veiled diplomatic tact, a uniquely unknowable person.

As Secretary-General, what kept him steadily moving forward against the gale-force winds of chaos, violence, and cynical double-dealing by governments was his systematic subjugation of individual will to a fervent wish to be used by God. Brought up in Swedish Protestant Christianity, a deep reader of the Christian mystics, Hammarskjöld not only valued, but actually lived, what he called “stillness,” a creative discipline that enabled him to stay flexibly creative in the welter of such events as the Suez crisis of 1956, when he was one of the first to initiate the exhausting process of shuttle diplomacy.

The working heart of Lipsey’s approach is to subtly tie the entries in “Markings,” Hammarskjöld’s spiritual poetry, a number of which are specifically dated, to the stream of acute international crises in which Hammarskjöld was crucially involved, including the battle for Congolese independence, during which he lost his life in a plane crash—a crash that may not have been accidental. Hammarskjöld’s refusal to compromise his impartiality, his total loyalty to the principles of U.N. Charter, was seen by his enemies as a kind of partiality in itself, in the spirit of “if you’re not with us you’re against us”—that all-too-familiar accelerant of alienation and war.
Even as he describes Hammarskjöld’s difficulties with the prickly egotism of heads of state, Lipsey has managed to absorb some of the spirit of Hammarskjöld himself—as found in this quotation from an interview Hammarskjöld did with a journalist: “A certain humility . . . helps you to see things through the other person’s eye, to reconstruct his case, without losing yourself, without being a chameleon, if you see what I mean.” Inspired by Hammarskjöld, Lipsey takes considerable pains to search out the universal humanity beneath the arrogance of figures like Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union and French General Charles de Gaulle.

As this is being written, a gas attack that killed hundreds of civilians in Syria is putting more and more pressure upon Western leaders to intervene in yet another horrific civil war. The superpower players are hardly different from Hammarskjöld’s time, Syria being a client state of Russia. The web of corruption and violence in the Congo has only become more and more tangled during the 60 years between Hammarskjöld’s death and the present. Not a lot has changed since he was Secretary-General, except that since the end of the cold war, U.S. military power has taken the partisan place of what might have been, and still could be, a transition toward a nonpartisan U.N. with more effective nonviolent peacekeeping forces, including far more comprehensive arms sales bans and economic sanctions that target elites.

But public opinion in the U.S. today concerning international cooperation still yields a division between conservative “realists” and progressive “dreamers”—advocates for a U.N. with more teeth often being stereotyped as the latter. Hammarskjöld himself was something quite different from a dreamer. He kept tenaciously to his understanding that if peace was an international necessity in the nuclear age, it had to follow that peace was also in every country’s national interest.

Given that challenges like nuclear disarmament and global climate change cannot be resolved by any nation working alone, national and international interests are inevitably merging. Surely this has a bearing upon how diplomats everywhere ought to be oriented in their training. If foreign service officers are unable to see the equal humanity of their counterparts in other cultures, if a spirit of international mutuality does not penetrate the narrowness of self-interested realpolitik, we will be left with the no-win of “you’re either with us or against us.” Surely there must be room for more of the Hammarskjöld spirit, a conviction that it is possible to identify something common in the interests of one’s own country and the interests of all countries.

The tragedy is that statesmen like Dr. Kissinger or General Colin Powell spend their careers in the obedient service of ostensibly American interests, but then, in the backward-glancing wisdom of retirement, they advocate eloquently—not that we shouldn’t be grateful, better late than never—for planet-oriented goals like the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Hammarskjöld, speaking to a group of American governors, understood this process with laser clarity:

“It is one of the surprising experiences of one in the position of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to find in talks with leaders of many nations, both political leaders and leaders in spiritual life, that the view expressed, the hopes nourished, and the trust reflected, in the direction of reconciliation, go far beyond what is usually heard in public. What is it that makes it so difficult to bring this basic attitude more effectively to bear upon the determination of policies? The reasons are well known to us all. It might not be understood by the constituency, or it might be abused by competing groups, or it might be misinterpreted as a sign of weakness by the other part. And so the game goes on—toward an unforeseeable conclusion.”
At some indefinable point in time, which many believe is already behind us, the need for separate nations either to maintain their grotesque stockpiles of nuclear weapons or to refuse to adjust their economic goals for the sake of climate stability, is going to be trumped by the reality that the status quo carries more risks than the risks of cooperation toward common survival goals. Over this fateful paradigm shift hovers the benign, tenacious, far-seeing spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld.

•••••


Thom Hartmann's
"Independent Thinker" Book of the Month

March 3, 2005

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I was ten years old when Dag Hammarskjöld died in 1961, and I still remember that week. Having grown up with monthly "duck and cover" drills in our elementary school, many of the kids of my generation saw the UN as the great moral force that would prevent the Soviet Union and war hawks in America from plunging the planet into a nuclear holocaust.

I remember wondering, the week his plane went down over Africa on a peace mission to the Congo, if Hammarskjöld's death would mean world war. I remember President Kennedy, on TV, saying, "Dag Hammarskjöld is dead, but the United Nations lives. His tragedy is deep in our hearts, but the tasks for which he died are at the top of our agenda." I remember that I felt mildly reassured.

I remember that we talked about it in school when it happened, and we asked our teacher if the only UN leader we had ever known (he was elected in 1953 as the second Secretary General of the then-still-new institution) meant the bombs would begin to fall soon. My father reminded me today that, at the time, he had been considering creating an "old fashioned fallout shelter" in our home by putting a false ceiling into the basement and covering it with dirt from the back yard.

On July 29th of this year, Hammarskjöld would have been 100 years old. Still regarded as its greatest Secretary General, he helped shape the latter half of the 20th century, and kept the world from plunging into World War III.

As Kofi Anan said of Hammarskjöld in September of 2001, "His life and his death, his words and his actions, have done more to shape public expectations of the office, and indeed of the [United Nations] Organization, than those of any other man or woman in its history. His wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and single-minded devotion to duty, have set a standard for all servants of the international community - and especially, of course for his successors - which is simply impossible to live up to. There can be no better rule of thumb for a Secretary-General, as he approaches each new challenge or crisis, than to ask himself, 'How would Hammarskjöld have handled this?'

On the United Nations website, the organization notes:

"In his final address of the year, broadcast over United Nations Radio on 31 December 1953, Mr. Hammarskjöld said:

"...Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just. And how can we fight for liberty if we are not free in our own minds? How can we ask others to sacrifice if we are not ready to do so?... Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence, that unity of purpose, that equity of judgment which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future, as men of a generation to whom the chance was given to build in time a world of peace." (UN Press Release SG/360, December 22, 1953)

The year he died, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously. (Today, the United Nations dedicates an entire region of their website to Hammarskjöld.)
Thirty years later, I discovered that Dag Hammarskjöld had kept a diary, which came into print in the 1960s with the title "Markings." Reading it, I was touched in a way that no other book has done in decades. Fifteen years ago, when I owned an advertising agency in Atlanta, I bought 120 copies and mailed them to all our clients as Christmas/Chanukah presents.

"Markings" is not a political book, but, instead, is the spiritual diary of a man tortured by and yet at the same time drawn to the incredible burden he held of keeping the world from disintegrating into nuclear holocaust while both Khrushchev and US hawks like McCarthy and Vice President Nixon were doing their best to thwart his efforts. It starts in 1925, when he was 20 years old, and ends at his death in 1961.

There are occasional veiled references to people and situations of the time, and knowing the history of the day it's not hard to figure them out, but mostly this book is the record of the personal spiritual and deeply mystical internal journey of one of the 20th century's greatest men, even as he walked through a political minefield and tried to keep the world from total nuclear annihilation.

"Markings" has developed a cult following over the 40 or so years it's been continuously in print. Two books have been written purely dedicated to decoding it - "Dag Hammarskjöld's White Book: The Meaning of Markings" by Gustaf Aulen, which sits beside my bed next to my old and tattered copy of "Markings," and "Dag Hammarskjöld: a biographical interpretation of 'Markings," by Henry P. Van Dusen.

A protestant Swede, Hammarskjöld would have called himself a Christian. I would call him a mystic who transcended Christianity. And friends I've introduced this book to - Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and agnostics - have found inspiration and meaning in it. (And for some, it was just too introspective or poetic.)

In "Markings," Hammarskjöld quotes the famous Sufi/Muslim mystic and poet Rumi: "The lovers of God have no religion but God alone." He quotes Zoroastrianists, ancient Chinese mystics, and Greeks.

As Gustaf Aulen writes, "God does not work only in the Christian sphere. His activity is universal, and its signs can easily be recognized everywhere with non-Christian religions. It is thus no accident that 'Markings' contains quotations from non-Christian authors. On the contrary, Hammarskjöld has searched - we might say, eagerly searched - for statements that can transcend the barriers between different religions."

Hammarskjöld was a Swede who loved his nation and the Scandinavian sense of "community obligation to others" (which conservatives decry as "socialism"), and an internationalist liberal with a PhD in economics. But in his heart he was a mystic.

Here are a few of his entries, just to give you a taste, a feeling, for his voice in this extraordinary diary:

On April 7, 1953, as the United Nations was voting him into an office he did not seek (up until just a few days before, he had no idea he had even been nominated), he wrote:

"Except in faith, nobody is humble. The mask of weakness or of Phariseeism is not the naked face of humility.
"And, except in faith, nobody is proud. The vanity displayed in all its varieties by the spiritually
immature is not pride.
"To be, in faith, both humble and proud: that is, to live, to know that in God I am nothing, but that God is in me."

***

"That strange moment when a man's features are dissolved into the trembling shimmer on the surface of the wave, through which you peer into the depths without being able to see the bottom. You are tempted to dive and to grasp - but the water cannot be grasped, and beneath its surface you cannot breathe. One step further and the relation is destroyed, reduced to terror and error: you imagine you are taking possession of a human being, but, in fact, you are losing him. In your attempt to break down the barriers of a personality, you are building a new prison for yourself."

***

"Below even the sunniest and most secure human relationship, the abyss lies waiting - because our lack of faith is fascinated by the possibilities of the night side of life."

In 1955, struggling with communist China to release US prisoners of war from the Korean conflict, buffeted by criticism from both Khrushchev and American conservatives, Hammarskjöld wrote in his diary:

"'To the pure all things are pure.' But if a man can only reach this state by making compromises, then his striving is itself an impurity. In such matters there are no differences of degree.

"'What! He is now going to try to teach me!' -- Why not? There is nobody from whom you cannot learn. Before God, who speaks through all men, you are always in the bottom class of nursery school."

***

"Before Thee in humility, with Thee in faith, in Thee in peace."

***

"So, once again, you chose for yourself - and opened the door to chaos. The chaos you become whenever God's hand does not rest upon your head.

"He who has once been under God's hand, has lost the innocence: only he feels the full explosive force of destruction which is released by a moment's surrender to temptation.

"But when his attention is directed beyond and above, how strong he is, with the strength of God, who is within him because he is in God. Strong and free, because his self no longer exists."

It's unlikely that people who did not know him personally would have guessed that, during this incredibly turbulent year, the thoughts Hammarskjöld would choose to write into his diary talked of his wrestling with faith instead of world politics. In a 1955 paragraph that reminds one of great mystics like Meister Eckhart or Paramahansa Yogananda, he added:

"It is not sufficient to place yourself daily under God. What really matters is to be only under God: the slightest division of allegiance opens the door to daydreaming, petty conversation, petty boasting, petty malice - all the petty satellites of the death-instinct.

"But how, then, am I to love God?" 'You must love Him as if He were a non-God, a non-Spirit, a non-Person, a non-Substance: love Him simply as the One, the pure and absolute Unity in which is no trace of Duality. And into this One, we must let ourselves fall continually from being into non-being. God helps us to do this.'"

On October 12, 1958, the Soviet Union exploded a 1000-kiloton nuclear bomb in an atmospheric test that shook the world. That day, Hammarskjöld wrote in his diary:

Day slowly bleeds to death
Through the wound made
When the sharp horizon's edge
Ripped through the sky.
Into its now empty veins
Seeps the darkness.
The corpse stiffens,
Embraced by the chill of night.
Over the dead one are lit
Some silent stars.

On the next page, perhaps at day's end, he wrote, simply, "Lord - Thine the day, And I the day's."

"Markings" is the diary of a man who was deeply struggling to fill himself with the transcendent, who had touched it and knew it, but also struggled with the humanness that so often keeps us from it. It's a frank and extraordinary insight into another person's soul, into his spiritual battles, his doubts, fears, and joys.

There is no mention in the book, other than in the most oblique of terms, of his work with the United Nations. Instead, we simply find the true heart - and the deepest anguish - of one of history's greatest statesmen and peacemakers.

Just a few months before he died, he wrote:

Sleepless questions
In the small hours:
Have I done right?
Why did I act
Just as I did?
Over and over again
The same steps,
The same words;
Never the answer.

In his final speech to the UN, he compared the struggle for world peace with the progression in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (his favorite) from the stormy, bleak First Movement into the Ode To Joy of the Forth Movement. This rise from the base to the joyous, from the selfish to the selfless, from the human to the divine, was the constant effort of his life. (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was played at the UN in the commemoration of his death.)

Dag Hammarskjold's extraordinary time on this world's stage - and the startling diary that he left behind - demonstrate to each of us the possibility of maintaining a deeply spiritual center, while still dealing with the most difficult problems of life. Indeed, his advice to himself was to throw himself into life with total effort, as his greatest gift both to his fellow humans and to God.

"Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live, great enough to die for," he wrote in 1952, before that fateful call from the United Nations.

Every reflective person struggles with finding his or her own personal mission, dedicating ourselves to things greater than our own short lives, and looking into the often frightening depths of our own souls.
In following Hammarskjöld's discovery of his own mission, passion, and struggles with the seduction of joy and the pain of death and tragedy, we better prepare ourselves for our own inevitable confrontations with the same.

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* * *

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Visions of a Secretary General: Dag Hammarskjöld and the United Nations 1953-1961
A finely –tuned portrait using newly recorded interviews, and archival film and photo material gives a sense of Dag Hammarskjöld as a person, his struggles during the cold War and his death in a plane crash in Africa. Available in English and Swedish on DVD from the UN Bookstore, or from Athena Films www.athenafilms.se

Remarks at High-Level Commemorative Event: "Dag Hammarskjöld's Legacy for UN Preventive Diplomacy in the 21st Century"

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UN Headquarters, 22 September 2011

Your Excellency, Prime Minister [Fredrik] Reinfeldt of Sweden,
Your Excellency, Foreign Minister [Carl] Bildt of Sweden,
Your Excellency, Ambassador [Mårten] Grunditz of Sweden,
Your Excellency, former Foreign Minister [Lakhdar] Brahimi,
Under-Secretary-General [Michelle] Bachelet,
Former Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights [Bertrand] Ramcharan,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in this very meaningful event, remembering and paying tribute to my
It is fitting that we meet here, in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, to remember the legacy of a Secretary-General who did so much to shape this organization, as well as the role of Secretary-General itself.

Allow me to share a personal recollection.

Just a few weeks after I took office as Secretary-General, I came here, to this auditorium, for the first time.

Although I was the head of the United Nations, I sat quietly in the back, in the dark. I did not make any speeches at the time. I was here to simply watch a movie screening of in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld.

The documentary film was called, “The Vision of a Secretary-General.” And it opened my eyes.

Of course I had read the writings of my predecessor.

But nothing compared to watching his words and deeds come alive in this film at the dawn of my own term in office -- an office he did so much to defend and define.

I was deeply moved by Hammarskjöld's integrity, his intelligence and his idealism.

And I am so honoured now to take part in various commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

One modest way I am marking this milestone is to dedicate to Dag Hammarskjöld my new report, Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results. I have just come from the Security Council where I presented this report and I made my speech there.

I am therefore all the more encouraged to see preventive diplomacy as the theme of this event.

Hammarskjöld articulated the very concept of preventive diplomacy.

He spoke about how to use the preventive capabilities of the UN “to forestall the emergence of conflicts.” He knew that the UN was best-placed to carry out what he rightly called this “arduous and time consuming” work.

My own efforts in preventive diplomacy have benefited from an understanding that has grown among Member States since Hammarskjöld's time: that calming tensions is far less costly in financial and human terms than coping with the effects of violent conflicts.

Yes, there are risks. Yes, the challenges are evolving. But I share Dag Hammarskjöld's abiding belief that preventive diplomacy is a constant and essential work in progress.

Allow me to share with you Dag Hammarskjöld's words to the American Political Science Association in September 1954. They are the same words I used to preface my report dedicated to Dag Hammarsköld. And I quote: “I believe we have only begun to explore the full potentialities of the
United Nations as an instrument for multilateral diplomacy, especially the most useful combinations of public discussion on the one hand and private negotiations and mediation on the other.” End quote.

All of you in this room know how true those words are to this day, the delicate balance between public and quiet diplomacy, the choice between mediation and direct talks.

Many of you here have deep experience negotiating peace agreements, standing up for women's rights and human rights, working on the frontlines of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

And Foreign Minister Bildt, you yourself have served not only your country but the international community, including the United Nations.

This past Sunday, during your visit to the Hammarskjöld Memorial Site at Ndola, you spoke for all of us when you paid tribute to your compatriot. And I quote: “We know that the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld is still very much alive. He set the rest of us on a path that he charted. He saw himself as a servant as much as a leader, and for that reason, he was followed by many. He knew and loved his own country deeply, and was inspired by its ideals to work in the service of the world.” End quote.

I will always be inspired by Dag Hammarskjöld's example of courage and conviction. His life was too short. His legacy is eternal.

Thank you.

1. Commemoration 1961-2011 | Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

www.dhf uu se › Dag Hammarskjöld

Sep 18, 2011 - Documentary: The Vision of a Secretary-General – Dag Hammarskjöld and the UN including a Q&A opportunity after the film with Peter ...

2. United Nations News Centre - Remarks at High-Level ...


Sep 22, 2011 - It is fitting that we meet here, in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, ...The documentary film was called, “The Vision of a Secretary-General.

3. Preventive Diplomacy ’a Constant and Essential Work in Progress ...

www.un org/News/Press/docs/2011/sgsm13837.doc.htm


Sep 22, 2011 - Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks at the commemorative ... It is fitting that we meet here, in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium,... The documentary film was called, The Vision of a Secretary-General.

4. Dag Hammarskjöld: "A Man of the Next Generation" | United Nations ...

www.unesco.org/.../dag_hammarskjoeld_a_man_of_the_next_generatio...

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Dec 13, 2011 - The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, ...Dag Hammarskjöld was a person of vision and principle, and at the same ...

5. Dag Hammarskjöld - Wikiquote

en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Dag_Hammarskjöld

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Servant of Peace : A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the United Nations (1962), p. 107; this has ...

6. Key books: a brief Hammarskjöld bibliography - Dag Hammarskjold

www.dag-hammarskjold.com/.../select-bibliography-by-and-about-dag-h...

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Ann Arbor, MI : Univ Of Michigan Press, c2013
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Dayal, Rajeshwar, 1909-


c1976

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