

**Lord Lea of Crondall speaking at a forum in Parliament on April 25, 2019 on the progress of the UN's reopened enquiry into the death of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in a plane crash in Central Africa in September 1961.**

Little did I realise when in the spring of 2012 - having read "*Who killed Hammarskjöld?*" the first of the two important books\*\* by Susan Williams in this field and discussed how I could perhaps add some value to her assessment – I had the bright idea of setting up a high-level Commission of International Jurists, to re-open the enquiry on Dag Hammarskjöld's tragic death in Ndola, Northern Rhodesia in September 1961, that we would still be at it today seven years later.

My task was first to persuade a distinguished international group to comprise the Hammarskjöld Inquiry Trust\* and second, having made discreet enquiries among former senior judiciary, to invite Sir Stephen Sedley to Chair an Enquiry Commission and I reiterate my thanks to him for having so readily agreed. I have not regretted the wisdom of that decision, likewise the role carried out with distinction by the three colleagues we were also able to persuade to become Commissioners, Ambassador Hans Corell from Sweden; Judge Richard Goldstone from South Africa; and Justice Wilhelmina Thomassen from the Netherlands.

Perhaps I should put on record that the financing of the operation of some £70,000 from the UK and other Trustees and from a range of individuals notably including from Sweden and the USA. This was principally for secretarial services and travel costs, but the Commissioners themselves acted *pro bono*.

One interesting aside on that is that we were denied registered status by the Charity Commission on the grounds of being a 'political' body, despite their approval for many bodies which have an only very thinly disguised partisan purpose. I surmise that this is because of heavy push-back from the Foreign Office and our Secret Intelligence Services. Turning now to the substance, it is important perhaps to underline that the Commission's remit was 'to report on whether new evidence is now available, which would justify the UN General Assembly in re-opening the Enquiry adjourned in October 1962'.

They presented such evidence in their report published in The Hague in September 2013 - which I subsequently introduced to the UN in New York a month later. Since 2013 - and the UN Secretariat's examination of the Commission's report - there has been a gradual further strengthening of the evidential case, from eye witnesses to radio intercepts. These findings were set out in a succession of reports to the General Assembly by the UN Secretary-General side by side with UN Resolutions tabled by the Government of Sweden, supported by the signatures of the best part of 100 countries - not including the UK of course. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Swedish Foreign Minister - now coupling that role with that of Deputy Prime Minister - Margot Wallström - for whom taking flak is a sort of battle honour.

I do not think that this has been an easy process for our Swedish friends - and not least, if I may add, for the family of Dag Hammarskjöld and those of the families of his UN colleagues and aircrew, recalling the trauma they went through 58 years ago.

I mention 58 years because, at the time of the crash, we had in Britain a 50-year rule for making Government records available in our National Archives, meaning that official papers from 1961 should have become available in this present decade. But that open date,

reduced to 30 years in 1967, does not automatically apply to the branch of the intelligence services known as MI6 – obviously raising the question about what it is that they must be wishing to hide. This is a disclosure gap which, if necessary, will be pursued in Parliament, but much to be preferred would be a change of heart once Judge Othman (former Chief Justice of Tanzania) has no doubt taken the opportunity to say more about this disgraceful failure of cooperation with him - given his explicit mandate by UN Resolution - when he reports next leading subsequently to a conclusion of his enquiries.

There are of course delicate issues for the UN in connection with an inquiry like this. The UN is to my mind in this respect a bit like the TUC (where I worked for 35 years). For a Secretary-General to 'call out' - as the colloquial phrase now has it - Member States for their lack of co-operation is an immense user of scarce political capital. The USA and Russia for their part have this in common: both are notoriously unwilling to let the UN - as they see it - get 'too big for its boots'. I can attest to this from my experience of being involved in the mid-1970's in the UN Commission on a Code of Practice for Transnational Corporations which had reached consensus conclusions between all the delegations but was finally vetoed jointly by Washington and Moscow - the former on the grounds that there could be no outside interference with the running of American business and the latter on the grounds that there could be no such thing as a non-exploitative capitalist enterprise.

I think it is worth recalling, for those of us who are old enough to remember the circumstance of 1961, that this was the height of the Cold War (the Cuban missile crisis was the following year) and there were sensitivities to put it no higher between the West and Moscow on the role of the newly elected socialist Prime Minister of the newly independent Congo, Patrice Lumumba. Strong counter forces had motives for ensuring that he be removed from the scene. Although the highest levels of Government from the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, downwards never said such a thing in public, I think it is consistent with the agenda of the Secret Intelligence Services because - as is independently corroborated - they were certainly involved in the murky events involved in Lumumba's judicial murder - having first been transported in chains to Katanga - in January of that year.

In his 2018 Report, Judge Othman stated, "Based on the totality of the information that we have at hand, it appears plausible that an external attack or threat may have been a cause of the crash, whether by way of a direct attack causing SE-BDY to crash or by causing a momentary distraction of the pilots". He also stated that "the burden of proof has shifted to Member States to show that they have conducted a full review of all records and archives in their custody or possession, including those within intelligence, security and defence archives".

His severe strictures regarding the UK's lack of co-operation is already on the public record in his Interim Report in 2018. It is in these circumstances unacceptable for MI6 to hide behind that The National Archives' webpage which states that 'the sensitive nature of intelligence work means that many files have been destroyed or retained by the security services themselves'. But to get to the root of the matter - as I have argued in the public print - it is inconceivable that MI6 have no files on the Congo covering 1961, given its heavy presence there – a fact subsequently attested to by the then Head of MI6 Operations in Leopoldville.

And the same applies surely regarding South Africa, given the role played by the special forces of the then Apartheid regime and its own armed forces of one type or another, in close alliance with the Central African Federation (1953-63), despite Harold Macmillan's observation that there was 'a wind of change blowing through Africa'.

And this brings me to the question of motive. Whereas it is true that it was not anyone's task - certainly not that of the Hammarskjöld Commission - to look at motive - I think it is a point worth making for a forum of this kind that (as Susan Williams points out in her second book) the uranium mine at Shinkolobwe in Southern Katanga contained eighty percent of the world's richest uranium and this was the ore which had been used for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, leading to the Japanese surrender at the end of the Second World War.

One can - not unreasonably - surmise that there was alarm in the West that this mine could fall into the hands of the Soviet Union. Let us assume that there was some such narrative in Whitehall. But this is not to contradict - rather to make even more credible - a narrative which states that there were forces which were resolute in wanting to stop dead in its tracks Hammarskjöld's mission to protect the territorial integrity of the Congo - i.e. to prevent the breakaway of Katanga. The omerta of MI6 does nothing to dispel this hypothesis. But we trust that reiteration by Judge Othman of his severe strictures regarding the UK's lack of co-operation will soon become too embarrassing for HMG not finally to relent.

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When this investigation is finally concluded, it would be clearly in the wider public interest for the UN itself to produce a booklet - let us say 30 or 40 pages - to set out a digest or authoritative summary of its successive findings on all these matters. It goes without saying that we would all be prepared to cooperate as appropriate.

I say this because there can be no doubt that this is a story uniquely for the UN to tell, not least as a tribute to - if I may say so - its most distinguished holder of the office of Secretary-General - but a story which needs to be made readily accessible: and while some of us who are still alive and kicking who have memories of the events in 1961, such an authoritative account under the imprint of the UN along with accompanying archives - cross referencing to national archives - will be indispensable for professional historians for many years to come - a very special monument and a dedication to understanding the history of our era and a tribute to a truly Global Statesman.

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\*\**Who Killed Hammarskjöld?* (2011) \*\**Spies in the Congo* (2016)