

Sweden marks Peace Day, discusses Dag Hammarskjöld career in the service of peace

Former members of the Hammarskjöld Committée, former Archbishop of Sweden KG Hammar, and Hans Kristian Simensen spoke about their work as part of the Peace Day Programme. Moderator Anders Franck, Gothenburg University asked the questions "What ways did you go to find Hammarskjöld and what is your relationship to him?"

KG Hammar:

"Only 18 years old when Hammarskjöld died the accident had great effect on me. As Swedes we were proud of his work at the UN and his importance for world peace during the Cold War and the decolonization. The Super Powers were standing against each other and Hammarskjöld was important for finding a peaceful solution. I started reading theology and two years later "*Markings*" came out in Swedish. I gave "*Markings*" a try but I didn't understand very much. "*Markings*" was my first meeting with Hammarskjöld. The text demands life experience. Twenty years later I had that and I got hooked. Since 1983 Dag Hammarskjöld's "*Markings*" has been my steady travel companion. We had a study group in Lund reading two times a week "*Markings*" and practicing meditation. We were a number of people knowing a little about Hammarskjöld and through "*Markings*" we learned about Christian mysticism."

"Coming to Uppsala they said "yes, we know that Hammarskjöld had cultural interests" but they had not read "*Markings*" which was considered to be irrelevant and not comprehensible. There are still Hammarskjöld professors there conducting advanced research on conflicts and the UN peace machinery. I tried to introduce what Hammarskjöld wrote in his preface to "*Markings*" that this is the only correct view on his life, and that "*Markings*" gives better understanding to what he has done."

"Next 10 years I accomplished some kind of dialog between these two sides of Hammarskjöld's journey. Especially what was written about Hammarskjöld - either the writers knew a lot about mysticism and "*Markings*" or the political and the UN machinery. Only recently books have been written to illustrate this properly. In Swedish we have Mats Svegfors, former *Svenska Dagbladet* chief editor, County Governor of Örebro, head of Swedish National Radio, and he knows a lot about Dag Hammarskjöld knowing both sides. Internationally we have Roger Lipsey whom has written about the two sides as one side of Hammarskjöld's personality, and we can really see how Hammarskjöld is guided from the inside to the outside. His engagement for peace is founded in his inner convictions on what existence is and what God is expecting.

Then the question was raised if we, one way or another, should commemorate that 50 years has passed since Hammarskjöld died at Ndola, and I met Hans Kristian and our roads crossed.

Anders Franck: Then you can fill in, Hans Kristian!

Hans Kristian: My starting point was that my father served in the UN in September 1961 in the Congo so the relationship to Hammarskjöld has passed from father to son. My father has followed this process both in London in 2011 when Susan Williams book came out, and in The Hague in 2013 when the Hammarskjöld Commission Report was released. My relationship to Hammarskjöld, however, is through Sture Linnér ..

Anders Franck: And Sture Linnér was Hammarskjöld's right hand in the Congo.

Hans Kristian: In 2008 Sture Linnér visited Gothenburg and Annica Dahlström and I met him. Annica Dahlström is President for The Scandinavian Committee for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina¹ where I am secretary. At that time we planned an archive to be situated in the Alexandria Library named after Hammarskjöld focusing on peace negotiations. This was my first meeting with Hammarskjöld. My second encounter was after meeting Susan Williams when she worked on her book about the Hammarskjöld fatal air accident. I had through Sune Persson, one of our Friends of the Alexandria Library, got access to documents in Oslo which Sture Linnér was very interested in. Only a couple of days after returning from Oslo to Gothenburg, Sture Linnér died. It was important that Susan Williams got the documents and we started co-operating. This led to the start of the Hammarskjöld Committee which was a natural follow up from Susan Williams' book. Next step for me was the UN Panel in 2015. I had collected a lot of material used in Susan's book as well as in our own Hammarskjöld Commission report in 2013.

Anders Franck: That material has been important.

Hans Kristian: I collected material in Washington, London and Stockholm.

KG Hammar: Can I interrupt you? We travelled from different directions and met at Ndola, and the British researcher Susan Williams' in London had the title "*Who killed Hammarskjöld?*" Not "how did he die" but simply "who killed him?" That was very bold! And she shows that we no longer can say that it was an accident but that it obviously was an assassination. Many were involved and it is still a mystery. Right before the summer of 2011 my telephone rang on a Saturday and it was the Swedish Ambassador in Lusaka, the capitol of Zambia, saying that "Dag Hammarskjöld is well known here" and asked if I could come down and talk about him in December. Well, I thought I was going to talk about Dag Hammarskjöld and mysticism. What happened next was that Susan Williams' book came out and my lecture plan was changed. We went to Ndola and the place where Hammarskjöld and 15 others died. We met charcoal burners who had been in the bush near to the crash site on the night between September 17-18 1961 telling us what they had seen in the air and on the ground. They are over 80 years old with eyes staring right into you telling what they have experienced as truth and reality. The challenge was: Shall you believe them or not? If not there had to be a reason and the question was finally: Did they have a reason to fabricate all this or was it the

¹ <http://www.scancombibalex.nu/>

governing Rhodesian regime in 1961 that had a reason to fabricate? Then it became evident that the Rhodesian colonial regime had doctored the crash investigation report to conceal what had really happened. This is the mutual experience we share from Ndola.

Anders Franck: Can we stop there for a moment? The question you have asked can not be neglected. What was it that happened? You were convinced by the people there and the book "*Who killed Hammarskjöld?*"

KG Hammar: Reading Susan William's book you saw that almost all the witnesses lied for the present interests - post-colonial interests having the financial power, political power, but also interest conflicts due to the Cold War - east/west-and apartheid regime in South Africa having a branch in Rhodesia trying to have a minority-rule. Then there were the nuclear weapons and the uranium mines so many interests were present there! Dag Hammarskjöld's return without swaying irritated many to say at least. It was apparent that many wished him to perish and it reminds of the "*Orient Express*" where everybody with a motive were stabbing. Ndola feels like that scenario.

Anders Franck: What do you say, Hans Kristian?

Hans Kristian: Yes, our meeting at Ndola was a turning point when KG believed the charcoal burners. Returning to Sweden KG wrote an article in *Svenska Dagbladet* addressing Carl Bildt that the investigation had to be reopened and that the witnesses had to be believed and it remained as our focus till the Commission was started Summer 2012. I strongly believe that something here is not correct and that it could be an assassination.

Anders Franck: Who could be holding the knife?

Hans Kristian: I can't answer that. However, the process that we have started with all the reports have led to UN asking to get material out to look closer again at this. Undoubtedly, a number of documents are still retained which indicates that it was not an ordinary fatal air accident. We should have the privilege to know and to look closer.

Anders Franck: And what you finally want is that the UN itself should investigate its own role?

Hans Kristian: Documents released last year at the National Archives in London show a close collaboration between the UN Commission in 1962 and the British Foreign Office. A number of points were changed and I personally think that the original points were historically relevant and correct. The points were changed to the benefit of the British.

Anders Franck: What is the situation today?

Hans Kristian: We have to demand that the UN look at their own role on rewriting historical facts in their own report. One thing is to demand from the NSA, the MI6, and all

the big intelligence services what kind of information they have. However, the most important thing for us today is to be aware of that the UN itself has been part of the cover-up. What the intelligence services have been part of we will probably never know, but maybe some of the answers is within the UN.

Anders Franck: How likely is that?

Hans Kristian: I don't know. However we have, last five years, been part of two reports and managed to start a debate so maybe phase three will be the UN and a closer look at their role.

Anders Franck: How about the engagement of the Swedish Government?

Hans Kristian: We were lucky with the governmental change in 2014. Carl Bildt's government was not interested in reopening the case, but the new government was, and saw to that the case was discussed again at the UN General Assembly. A Swedish initiative and I honour them!

KG Hammar: The Swedish attitude, looking at it from the start, it is curious that there was some kind of avoidance in the Swedish position and many Swedish soldiers are saying that they were ordered not to say anything about it - there was something one wished to hide. Looking at Dag Hammarskjöld's personality in relation to the Swedish politics of the time many would say he was strange and a fanatic. He thought that justice always should prevail regardless of being rich or poor and influence should be distributed equally and many other idealistic ideas but where politics thought that he could show more will to compromise. Probably some were very happy when Hammarskjöld left the stage not being very comfortable with that peace and justice should come first, big power's relations and Sweden's position come secondly.

Anders Franck: He sat first as State-Secretary in the finance department, later in a social-democratic government and he would probably not today be willing to compromise.

KG Hammar: Not if they knew who he really was which they didn't. They thought he was a competent bureaucrat which did well in international financial negotiations after the end of the war and so on. If the big powers had known that he had a so strong personal will and conviction he would never have been elected. Now it is always a compromise not finding the strongest and most convincing but finding someone who knows a little bit.

Anders Franck: That he was elected could be seen in the light of what he wrote in his "*Markings*" which actually nobody had read before his death. Could you say something more about this person that you have studied so well?

KG Hammar: Dag Hammarskjöld belonged to a political civil servant family with a strong sense of duty with Luther on his shoulder. From his mother he had learned the soft piety from the awakening traditions and spiritual sensitivity which lead to deliverance by

acquaintance of the the mystics. A danger with religious traditions is when they go on literal belief and the questions forces you to belief literally on things. Hammarskjöld writes in "*Markings*" that "not before I could let the "literality" go I could affirm by spiritual need." As the mysticism says "the truth is behind the words." We people we can never let go of expressing us though it is written that the experiences we have made is not possible to be captured by words but still we are trying. Hammarskjöld's strength is that he found his own language to capture the mystical experience. Many secular Swedes find Hammarskjöld to be a good guide because of his non-religious language capturing these experiences that are common for all humans.

Anders Franck: Also his closest friends were surprised when they later on read "*Markings*"? I will remember that somebody said that they had sensed a spiritual dimension with him but didn't understand that it was like this?

KG Hammar: No, he didn't hide it but didn't display it either. He was used to speaking in literary and art circles - the broader expression of spirituality - that was well known but that he was so specific about the mystic experience nobody knew. When it later was published in 1963 the Swedish cultural society said "What a luck that he died before he dragged the world with him in his madness! Here are messianic dreams and he believes he is God himself etc". It is the language of mysticism that they have no understanding of and he was condemned.

Anders Franck: Your comment is² that one explanation was the Swedish author climate so dominated by Herbert Tingsten and Ingemar Hedenius that the understanding could have been greater?

KG Hammar: That is because Uppsala has dominated completely.

Anders Franck: The story goes that during his period at the UN he visited churches. He was recognized by the priest when sitting on a bench in the rear. The priest had written to him expressing his thankfulness but Hammarskjöld got really irritated.

KG Hammar: He never returned to the church where he had been recognized. I know personally that it is wonderful to sit behind a pillar now and then. A world celebrity like he was and he was very sensitive about this. As a Swede he knew exactly what it was like - it is still like that if you are religious and even worse in the sixties regarded as imbecile if you were a pious person! Nobody could say that he was religious because he didn't have any education.

Anders Franck: Hans Kristian, what do you think when you hear KG remind us about all that Hammarskjöld did must be regarded in the light of "*Markings*"? What is your opinion

² KG Hammar: Booklet "Vägen valde dig" (The Road chose you) https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/pdf-filer/DagH_inlaga.pdf

about the work he conducted?

Hans Kristian: In my life the Alexandria Library has been very important. It started for my part in the early nineties when I was in a situation wondering what should become of me in this world. I prayed a silent prayer that I wanted a project to show what I was worth. Shortly afterwards I got to know a teacher at Chalmers School of Architecture, a Norwegian too! I was standing in front of the information desk and he came by and asked "What on earth are you doing here?" I told him about this project I was interested in - music & architecture - and that I was in contact with a British architect. The teacher pulled out an article from the magazine stand and said "This is the project you shall work with!" And that was the Alexandria Library!

Anders Franck: And that was the answer to your prayer?

Hans Kristian: Yes!

Anders Franck: It was the road that chose you! Have you read "*Markings*" after meeting KG?

Hans Kristian: There are moments in life where "light" and "force" - call it whatever you want - is with you. The times I have felt that it has been of major importance for what I shall do. So I agree to that completely!

Anders Franck: You can confirm that the road choose you!

Hans Kristian: Yes I can do that!

Anders Franck: Your father, that you mentioned to begin with, he is not here today. But, you have another person here who has played an important part - professor emerita Annica Dahlström. Now, when your father and you meet what are you discussing?

Hans Kristian: When I grew up we never discussed Dag Hammarskjöld at home. Congo was one thing but never Hammarskjöld as a person. My father said it was "big politics".

Anders Franck: But he knows about all the energy and time you have spent on this project?

Hans Kristian: He finds it very exciting! Some years ago there was a Congo veteran meeting in Oslo where the veterans were discussing if it had been an assassination or not. I believe most soldiers serving in the Congo in 1961 believed it was an assassination but that still has to be proved.

Anders Franck: Would you like to say something more about the Alexandria Library?

Hans Kristian: In 2005-2006, before Sture Linnér came into the picture, my focus was planning a peace mediator archive. Ismail Serageldin, the director of the library, has a

great network of Nobel Peace Laureates. To collect documents and have them digitalized building a research base was very central. When the Hammarskjöld name turned up it was a very interesting experience for the process trying to establish the archive – some doors were opened but other doors got closed. It took time for me to understand that this was very controversial. During the development between 2011-2016 the UN has shown interest in an archive. This is what I am working on now as my latest relation to Hammarskjöld and it is to preserve the documents that I have collected and make a research base. Maybe within a year or two I can answer that question how far we have got.

Anders Franck: What will happen next?

Hans Kristian: UN has asked the member states to make a list of documents believed to be relevant to the fatal air accident. I don't think that will happen but that doesn't matter because I believe we already have most of the documents. If not the UN receives a positive reply I believe my documents can be the start of this research archive.

Anders Franck: Have you made more contacts than just here in Gothenburg? Researchers that could be interested in working with Hammarskjöld? You mentioned Sune Persson whom was active within the Gothenburg university.

Hans Kristian: Through Leif Eriksson at the Gothenburg university I have been able to apply for money for the digitalization of documents.

Anders Franck: Gothenburg has a strong tradition with peace research.

KG Hammar: Where is Susan Williams today? Is she still on the Hammarskjöld track?

HK Simensen: Yes, she is still on the Congo track coming out with a new book now on the uranium battle. Finally, I can say that we cannot understand Hammarskjöld's death without discussing the uranium battle.

Anders Franck: To what extent are you two now going to travel together?

KG Hammar: I am consumed. I had a period in 2011, was part of the commission and had a leading role when strong wills were involved. What is needed in the future is what Hans Kristian is doing - digging in the archives and searching.

Anders Franck: But you will still be there as moral support?

Hans Kristian: You bet!

KG Hammar: Yes, he shares a lot of information with me.

Anders Franck: Thank you so much for this conversation!

KG Hammar: Booklet "Vägen valde dig" (The Road chose you) https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/pdf-filer/DagH_inlaga.pdf