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In Memoriam:

Dag Hammarskjöld
(July 29, 1905-September 18, 1961)

By

Ismail Serageldin

“For all that has been thanks. For all that will be, yes”.
-- Dag Hammarskjöld

Hammarskjöld and Sweden:

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

A hundred years ago, **Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld** was born. The youngest of four sons of Agnes Almquist and Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, prime minister of Sweden, member of the Hague Tribunal, governor of Uppland, chairman of the Board of the Nobel Foundation.

His parents had a profound influence on the young Dag. He reflected on their influence in a radio program in 1953, saying: "From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country - or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions. From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side, I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters in God."

Dag Hammarskjöld was an outstanding student, earning a degree from Uppsala University in 1925 in the humanities. His main intellectual and professional interest for some years, however, was political economy. He took a second degree at Uppsala in economics, in 1928, a law degree in 1930, and a doctoral degree in economics in 1934.

He mastered English, French, and German in addition to his native Swedish. He liked poetry and read it in the original German, French or English. He appreciated painting, especially the work of the French Impressionists. He could discourse on music, particularly on the

compositions of Beethoven; and in later years, participated in sophisticated dialogue on Christian theology. In athletics he was a gymnast, a strong skier, and a mountaineer who served for some years as the president of the Swedish Alpinist club. In short, Dag Hammarskjöld was a Renaissance man.

His influence on Sweden was profound. He coined the term "planned economy", and drafted the legislation which opened the way to the creation of the so-called "welfare state". He remained aloof from membership in any political party. Yet he played an important part in Swedish and European post-war affairs. He participated in the talks which organized the Marshall Plan, and he led the Executive Committee of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. His diplomatic skills were brilliantly demonstrated in avoiding Swedish commitment to NATO, while collaborating on the political level in the Council of Europe and on the economic level in the Organization of European Economic Cooperation.

Hammarskjöld and the United Nations:

But Hammarskjöld's greatest legacy to the world, was his role at the UN. He represented Sweden as a delegate to the United Nations in 1949 and again from 1951 to 1953. He was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1953 for a five-year term and reelected in 1957. He redefined the role of the UN, crafted an expanded mandate for the post of the Secretary-General and gave new meaning to the concept of international diplomacy.

Hammarskjöld established the UN as we know it. He drew up a set of regulations defining the secretariat's responsibilities to the international organization, affirming the Staff's independence from narrowly conceived national interests. He approached international crises through what he liked to call "preventive diplomacy" and while doing so sought to establish more independence and effectiveness in the post of Secretary-General itself.

His first major victory was in 1954-1955, when he personally negotiated the release of American soldiers captured by the Chinese in the Korean War. Next was the Suez Crisis. In 1956-1957 he worked with many others in the UN to get the UN to nullify the use of force by Israel, France, and Great Britain. He created, under the UN's mandate, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) - the first ever mobilized by an international organization. In 1958 he suggested to the Assembly a solution to the crises in Lebanon and Jordan and subsequently directed the establishment of the UN Observation Group in Lebanon and the UN Office in Jordan, bringing about the withdrawal of the American and British troops which had been sent there. In 1959 he sent a personal representative to Southeast Asia when Cambodia and Thailand broke off diplomatic relations, and another to Laos when problems arose there.

Out of these crises came procedures and tactics new to the UN - the use of the UNEF, employment of a UN "presence" in world trouble spots, personal envoys of the Secretary-General and a steadily growing tendency to make the Secretary-General the executive for operations for peace.

So totally accepted are these aspects of the UN today that we tend to forget their revolutionary character when Hammarskjöld introduced them so many years ago. In the space of seven years,

he had changed the international political landscape and made the UN the indispensable actor in global conflict resolution.

Hammar skjöld and Egypt:

However, there was and still is a major link between Hammar skjöld and Egypt. This history was recalled in the December 1961 presentation speech of Gunnar Jahn, Chairman of the Nobel Committee, awarding Hammar skjöld his Nobel peace prize posthumously. It deserves to be repeated here.

In September of 1956, the conflict that arose between Great Britain, France, and Egypt, after Egypt had nationalized the Suez Canal, was submitted to the Security Council. In October, 1956, Dag Hammar skjöld tried to find a solution to this dispute through private negotiations conducted by himself, and it looked as if these would lead to a satisfactory result. But at the end of October, 1956, Israel attacked Egypt, and on October 30 the Security Council was called together to deal with the situation that had arisen. This meeting, however, proved abortive when France and Great Britain exercised their veto right to obstruct a resolution calling on Israel to withdraw her troops. On the next day, October 31, France and Great Britain launched their attack on Egypt. At the meeting of the Security Council on October 31, Hammar skjöld was the first person to speak. In a forthright speech he hinted that he would resign unless all member states honored their pledge to abide by all clauses of the Charter.

On October 31 the General Assembly was then convoked, and on November 1 passed a resolution calling on the parties concerned to terminate hostilities immediately and requesting the Secretary-General to keep a close watch on the course of events and to report on the way in which the resolution was being implemented. In reality the Secretary-General was thus vested with far-reaching powers. On November 3 Hammar skjöld was already able to announce that France and Great Britain were willing to suspend hostilities, provided that Israel and Egypt were prepared to accept the establishment of a UN force to ensure and supervise the suspension of hostilities and subsequently to prevent the violation of the Egyptian-Israeli border. The result was that the war was brought to an end, a demarcation line was fixed, and a UN force was established to guard it.

Thus by taking the initiative on October 31 and delivering his major speech at the security council, suggesting that the continued misbehavior of the big powers (Great Britain and France) could result in his resignation, and then (with the assistance of a number of countries) taking the matter to the general assembly where the two great powers could not veto it, he showed how the secretary general of the UN could be an active actor on the world stage. Clearly his ability to play this role was made possible by the margin of maneuver that was provided by the position of the US and President Eisenhower, and the position of the USSR aligned with the US in support of Egypt, plus the fact that world opinion massively condemned the attacks on Egypt. But Hammar skjöld deserves enormous credit in having not only seized that margin of maneuver, but also by his having emerged – along with the UN – the only way out for all the parties. He thus showed that the UN was indeed indispensable as a forum and as a legitimate framework for collective international action, and that the Secretary-General was much more than an international Civil servant.

Building on the momentum of Suez, he played again a useful role in another Middle East crisis the very next year. He made a major contribution to the solution of a crisis between Lebanon, Jordan, and the Arab States in 1958. In this, he worked closely with the government of Egypt and exercised his own personal diplomacy with the nations involved: both the United States and Great Britain, succeeding again to help ease their departure from their ill-advised interventions.

The last crisis:

It was with these precedents established that the United Nations and Hammarskjöld took up the problems stemming from the new independence of various developing countries. The most dangerous of these, that of the newly liberated Congo (later known as Zaire), arose in July, 1960, when the new government there, faced with mutiny in its army, secession of its province of Katanga, and intervention of Belgian troops, asked the UN for help. The UN responded by sending a peace-keeping force, with Hammarskjöld in charge of operations.

When the situation deteriorated during the year that followed, Hammarskjöld had to deal with enormous difficulties in the Congo and with mounting criticism in the UN. Attacks seemed to come from all sides. But that neither unnerved him, nor did it make him waver. For he was not afraid of failure if that was what fate held for him, provided that he had given his all. For he was the man who had perceptively said:

“Life only demands from you the strength that you possess. Only one feat is possible -- not to have run away”.

A last crisis for him came in September, 1961, when, arriving in Leopoldville to discuss details of UN aid with the Congolese government, he learned that fighting had erupted between Katanga troops and the noncombatant forces of the UN. A few days later, in an effort to secure a cease-fire, he left by air for a personal conference with Tshombe, ruler of Katanga. Sometime in the night of September 17-18, he and fifteen others aboard perished when their plane crashed near the border between Katanga and North Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

He died in the quest for peace, leaving a legacy that remains an inspiration to many around the world to this day. He received the Nobel Peace prize by unanimous decision of the Nobel Committee in 1961. It was delivered posthumously to Ambassador xxx with five members of his family in attendance on the 10th of December 1961.

A life of achievement and honor:

Hammarskjöld's short, momentous and inspiring life, resulted in his receipt of the Nobel Peace prize (awarded posthumously, though selected while he was alive).

After his death, the publication in 1963 of his "journal" entitled *Markings* revealed the inner man as few documents ever have. It is an essential document to understand a man who said that: “The longest journey is the journey inward”. So inward we must look. And *Markings* is the guide into that inward journey of Dag Hammarskjöld.

The entries in this manuscript, Hammarskjöld wrote in a covering letter to his literary executor, constitute ... “a sort of White Book concerning my negotiations with myself - and with God”. There is a delicate irony in this use of the language of the diplomat. The entries themselves are spiritual truths given artistic form. *Markings* contains many references to death, perhaps none more explicit or significant than this portion from the opening entries, written when he was a young man:

Tomorrow we shall meet,
 Death and I -
 And he shall thrust his sword
 Into one who is wide awake.

He was a lonely man, who sublimated his loneliness into a higher purpose. In a remarkably prescient observation he said: “Pray that your loneliness will spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for”.

Dag Hammarskjöld was exposed to much criticism during his tenure at the UN. He never wavered. He was fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of his task, he devoted himself to it completely. He pursued his chosen path with vigor and determination. He had made his peace with his conscience and that was all that mattered to him. He was a liberated man. A term that I take from a private letter he wrote in 1953, where he said:

"To know that the goal is so significant that everything else must be set aside gives a great sense of liberation and makes one indifferent to anything that may happen to oneself."

The key to understand Dag Hammarskjöld is partly in his personal character and his enormous talents, partly in this unwavering belief in the value of the cause that he fought for. In an age where cynicism is rampant is difficult for many to believe that such a consummate diplomat and experienced negotiator could remain an idealist. Yet to this day, it is his idealism that shines through. He never doubted that the UN could and must be an effective and constructive international organization, capable of giving life to the principles and aims expressed in the UN Charter. He believed that the UN Charter should be the standard to which all nations should hew. He mobilized his staff and his UNEF forces under that banner, confident that they would be persons who both felt and acted internationally.

Today, many still doubt that goal, as they look back wistfully at the era of Hammarskjöld and the UN he created. But his idealism, was tempered by realism. In a speech in Chicago in 1960 he said:

"Working at the edge of the development of human society is to work on the brink of the unknown. Much of what is done will one day prove to have been of little avail. That is no excuse for the failure to act in accordance with our best understanding, in recognition of its limits but with faith in the ultimate result of the creative evolution in which it is our privilege to cooperate."

His driving force was his belief that goodwill among men and nations would one day create conditions in which peace would prevail in the world. He did not care for flattery, nor was he intimidated by criticism. He followed his star, bearing himself with great dignity. He defined dignity as distinct from the approval of others, saying: “The only kind of dignity which is genuine is that which is not diminished by the indifference of others”.

Today, his idealism seems of another age. We who lived in that age, shared that idealism. Independence from the yoke of colonial rule was going to be the magic gateway to a prosperous future of justice and learning. Revolution of the masses against the oligarchs was going to create a new social order. Yet for many of the new countries, it was corruption, bloodshed and tyranny that befell the poor citizens of the newly independent states.

Saddened – and perhaps wizened – by experience, some flaunt their cynicism as they belittle the optimism of the dreams of yesterday. Yet were it not for dreamers, men would still live in caves.

So let me here salute the idealist and the doer in Dag Hammarskjöld. He showed us that he can live true to his ideals, that he can deal with cynics without losing his idealism. He demonstrated that great achievements were not necessarily hostages to compromise, but frequently were born of principle and determination. He proved that it is not only possible to dream, but that it is necessary to have dreams that guide our steps to higher purposes. He taught us that we should not be afraid to try, for it is always better to try and fail than to have failed to try. That is why we still celebrate the man and his legacy today more than four decades after his untimely death.

The Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Parliament awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize for 1961 posthumously in gratitude for all he did, for what he achieved, for what he fought for: to create peace and goodwill among nations and men.

No man could ask for a greater epitaph.

Thank you.