

**The unexplained deaths of Dag Hammarskjöld and colleagues:
Why UK cooperation with the UN's search for the truth is important**

Thursday 25 April at 3pm
Room 4a, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW
(Chair: Baroness Garden of Frognal)

Rt. Revd. Trevor Mwamba Former Bishop of Botswana
"Morality of the pursuit of the truth; an African viewpoint."

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Adlai Stevenson the American Ambassador to the United Nations described Dag Hammarskjöld as "the very embodiment of the international civil servant - as the Secretary General of the United Nations should ideally and always be. He was resolutely impartial, resolutely even-handed, and resolutely firm in carrying out the mandates with which he was entrusted."

It was in the course of carrying out his mandate of resolving the crisis in the Congo that the greatest Secretary General of the United Nations died in my country Zambia - Northern Rhodesia as it then was - in 1961.

He died in Ndola where 24 years later I was ordained a priest. Not far from Ndola is a beautiful mining town called Luanshya where I was the parish priest. Whenever, I drove to Ndola I passed the road leading to the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Crash Site. It was declared a national monument in 1970 and UNESCO World Heritage Centre in 1997.

A great man died on Zambian soil. And President Kennedy, a great man himself, and the most powerful man in the world at the time said of Dag Hammarskjöld:

"I realise now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century."

V.K. Krishna Menon, the Indian ambassador, echoed the same sentiments that Hammarskjöld was a 'great world statesman ...' and referring to the plane crash said:

'If it is an accident it is a great international tragedy; if it is something else, it will become an international crime. It is the desire of my Government and people that there should be a complete investigation...'

It is something else. Dr Susan Williams magisterial book, *Who Killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, The Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa* presents us with compelling evidence of the truth that the Rhodesian inquiry which laid the basis for subsequent investigations buried.

The truth unearthed shows considerable new evidence as well as clear proof that the Rhodesian inquiry was seriously flawed by a pre-disposition to view the world in racist terms and by the suppression of information. The Panel Report (2015) noted in paras 46-70 of the judge's report the importance of the witness statements by the charcoal burners. In 1961, these were considered unreliable; a colonial era attitude.

It is apparent too as Dr Williams has unearthed that some information was tampered with as in the case of the Rhodesian ballistics reports and the air - brushing of the photographs of Dag Hammarskjold's body.

All this unearthing is because we live in a moral universe in which the truth cannot be suppressed indefinitely. Vaclav Havel, in his essays *Living in Truth* wrote that: 'The desire to be in touch with what is true, and to live by it in all its consequences, is deeply embedded in human beings. We cannot live falsely for long; truth has a radiant power that cannot be quenched...we cannot live for long 'within the lie'.

When Dag Hammarskjold died on Zambian soil his soul became a part of Zambia and Zambia a part of him. As Zambians we are therefore desirous to know the truth of why Dag Hammarskjold was killed. It's important for Zambia's identity to know its past in order to embrace its authentic self in the future.

Truth is indivisible. I therefore echo what Professor Georges Nzongola - Ntalaja a renowned Congolese scholar of African politics has voiced of the need of the people of Central and Southern Africa for more information about the 1960s.

His analysis that the people of the Congo are concerned to concentrate on the future rather than the past but need to understand that past in order to plan for the future, is applicable to Zambians too. Also applicable is his observation that one particular handicap is that so much of its history has been determined by external powers and that the documents representing that history are still in their hands. And that it was necessary to establish a baseline of fact, in order to prevent misunderstanding and to build a spirit of harmony and reconciliation.

At the time Professor Nzongola - Ntalaja made his wise analysis he hailed the investigation into the assassination of Patrice Lumumba which just concluded as a major step forward. And when the historian Ludo De Witte published his findings, the Belgian government offered an apology to Lumumba's family and to the Congo for their role in the assassination.

As a Zambian, Pan Africanist, and citizen of the world and retired lawyer! I endorse unreservedly Dr Williams conclusion, that both Hammarskjold and Lumumba were killed in the context of the decolonisation of Central Africa and the self-interest of the western powers and the multinationals operating in the region. And that they both sought to protect the integrity of the Congo and the self determination of its people – free from the greed and interference of foreign powers.

In the pursuit of the truth which cannot be buried or suppressed I support the second UN ongoing inquiry initiated in 2015.

In this inquiry Judge Othman from Tanzania has asked Angola, DRC, Portugal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the same questions as the original nine countries (USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Russia, S Africa, Belgium) but late in the day and the former group of countries will have much less time to complete. It is imperative therefore that they should not be treated differently.

Noting that the First Federal Rhodesian Inquiry was criticised for failing to properly respect eye witness reports, the Inquiry's time limitations should not be seen to repeat that error by forcing these five mainly African states to complete their work in too short a time.

What is of importance is that the truth is finally established as to who killed Dag Hammarskjold. By his death the world lost one of its greatest servants - a brilliant mind, a brave and compassionate

spirit, a peacemaker, a mystic. He pointed us to strive diligently for a world in which people solve their problems by peaceful means and not by force.

I conclude with this insightful statement I picked up watching the movie United Kingdom based on the book Colour Bar by Susan Williams. It's a true romantic story of Ruth Williams and Seretse Khama who fell in love in 1948. Seretse Khama became the first President of Botswana.

There is a scene in the movie where Seretse exiled to London gives a speech at a meeting. It's the Council for the defence of Seretse Khama formed by his friends. He says this:

"When a man tells a lie, he loses his dignity and so it is with a country. "

So, I join many people of good willing in urging the British and South African governments, today, to cooperate with the UN. For ultimately the truth does set a person free and a country too - ennobling both, making them better, to do good in the world.