



The Ethics of
Dag Hammarskjöld

This publication has been produced by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in cooperation with the Dag Hammarskjöld Programme at Voksenåsen. It is also available online at www.dhf.uu.se

Editor: Henning Melber

Language editor: Wendy Davies

Designed by Mattias Lasson.

Printed by X-O GrafTryckeri AB, Uppsala 2010.

Distributed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Övre Slottsgatan 2, SE-753 10 Uppsala, Sweden

Phone: +46-18-410 10 00, Fax: +46-18-122072

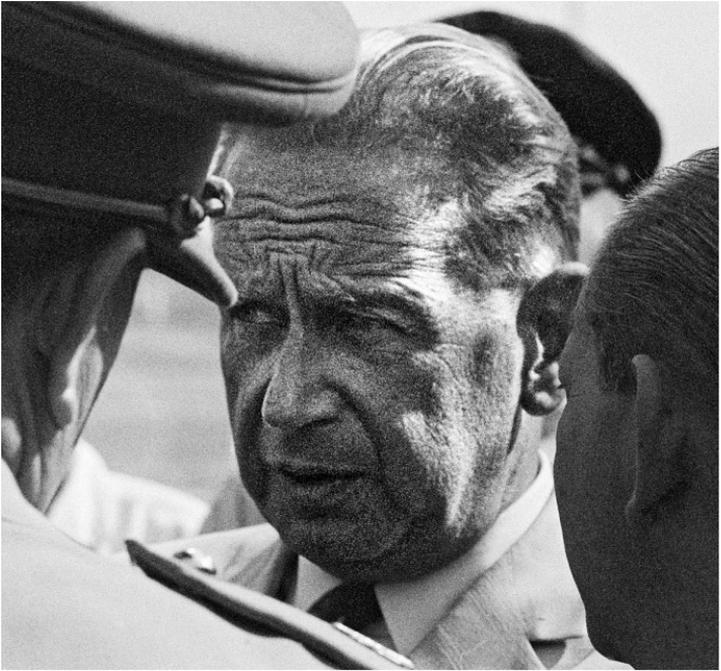
Web: www.dhf.uu.se

ISBN: 978-91-85214-56-3

The Ethics of
Dag Hammarskjöld

With contributions by
Hans Corell
Inge Lønning
Henning Melber

Uppsala
2010



UN Photo/HP

Contents

Preface	4
The Need for the Rule of Law in International Affairs – Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld’s address at Oxford University on 30 May 1961, ‘The International Civil Service in Law and in Fact’ <i>Hans Corell</i>	6
Politics, Morality and Religion – The Legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld <i>Inge Lønning</i>	18
Dag Hammarskjöld’s <i>zeitgemäße Betrachtungen</i> – Reflections on Inge Lønning’s Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture <i>Henning Melber</i>	38

Preface

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Dag Hammarskjöld Programme at Voksenåsen and Networkers SouthNorth all benefit from similar-minded efforts to promote the values and norms that the second Secretary-General of the United Nations stood for.

Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash at Ndola in then Northern Rhodesia, close to the border with the (formerly Belgian) Congo in the early hours of 18 September 1961. He was on a mission seeking to mediate in the conflict following the decolonisation process of this country, whose people still suffer today from oppression, exploitation and violence. Dag Hammarskjöld shaped a lasting concept of the role and responsibilities of the international civil servant, creating standards against which his successors continue to be measured.

In 2009 the commemoration of Hammarskjöld's untimely death took for the first time complementary forms in Uppsala and at Voksenåsen. Hans Corell delivered a lecture on Hammarskjöld's pioneering understanding of his role as international civil servant on 18 September at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Uppsala. Inge Lønning presented the first Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in Voksenåsen on 2 October, focusing on the late Secretary-General's ability to combine politics, morality and religion in his reflections on and approaches to challenging matters. To underline the common agenda, Henning Melber was invited to add his comments to this presentation.

Since these three complementary speeches all shared an obvious engagement with dimensions of Hammarskjöld's political, ethical and moral philosophy, it was almost self-evident that we should decide upon their collective publication in a booklet. This not only reinforces respect for and recognition of the relevance of Hammarskjöld's thoughts in the context of our 21st century; it is also in a sense an early contribution to the special commemoration that will take place in 2011, when it will be 50 years since Hammarskjöld's death. A commemoration that is forward-looking in the sense that it invites us to tackle issues that are as crucial now as they were half a century ago.

We trust that the texts in this compilation will find a wide readership appreciating the importance of keeping alive the values and norms that Dag Hammarskjöld lived and died for.

John Y. Jones
Dag Hammarskjöld
Programme
Voksenåsen

Henning Melber
Dag Hammarskjöld
Foundation
Uppsala

The Need for the Rule of Law in International Affairs

– Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld’s
address at Oxford University on 30 May
1961, ‘The International Civil Service in
Law and in Fact’

*By Hans Corell**

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this commemorative event. I consider it a great honour. As a student of Uppsala at the time, I followed with great interest the work of Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. And I will never forget that September day in 1961 when the news of his tragic death at Ndola in Africa reached us. A few days later, I was one of the stewards at his funeral in Uppsala Cathedral.

★ Lecture presented on the occasion of a Commemorative Event on the 48th Anniversary of Dag Hammarskjöld’s Death at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, on 18 September 2009.

Hans Corell was Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the United Nations from March 1994 to March 2004. From 1962 to 1972, he served in the Swedish judiciary. In 1972, he joined the Ministry of Justice where he became Director of the Division for Administrative and Constitutional Law in 1979. In 1981, he was appointed Chief Legal Officer of the Ministry. He was Ambassador and Under-Secretary for Legal and Consular Affairs in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs from 1984 to 1994. Since his retirement from public service in 2004 he has been engaged in many different activities in the legal field, inter alia as legal adviser, lecturer, and member of various boards. He is involved in the work of the International Bar Association, the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University and the Hague Institute for the Internalisation of Law, among other organisations. He is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at Lund University.

When more than 30 years later I found myself in the position of Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the United Nations it was natural to seek direction in Dag Hammarskjöld's writings and thinking. In particular, I found guidance in an address that he gave at Oxford University on 30 May 1961, 'The International Civil Service in Law and in Fact'.

I have therefore chosen this address by Dag Hammarskjöld as a basis for my speech today, which I have entitled 'The Need for the Rule of Law in International Affairs'.

However, before we dwell upon the subject that Dag Hammarskjöld focused on in his address, let me first set the scene.

Looking at the situation in the world today, I believe that it is fair to say that the need for the rule of law in international affairs has never been greater. The challenges that humankind faces in our days of globalisation are tremendous.

The first challenge that comes to mind is the same as the overriding challenge in 1945 when the UN Charter was adopted: international peace and security. The purpose of the United Nations is to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'. And yet, there are so many conflicts going on in our days.

A worldwide survey of conflicts is soon to be published. It was carried out by the International Institute of Higher Studies in Criminal Sciences (ISISC). The research and data amassed shows that between 1945 and 2008, some 310 conflicts took place. Depending on the estimates, the number of the victims of these conflicts fluctuates between 92 and 101 million casualties. This is twice the combined casualties of World Wars I and II. According to Professor Peter Wallensteen, this

corresponds roughly with the information from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program.

Another challenge is poverty. Millions of people are suffering, living on less than a dollar a day. Many do not have access to clean drinking water. The Millennium Development Goals, set for 2015, seem too distant when only six years remain of the time set for their fulfilment.

Yet another challenge is the world population, which now stands at 6.7 billion people, with a predicted increase of 40 per cent by 2050; the forecast is that we will be 9.2 billion by then. Diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS are other challenges that mankind faces. And then, of course, there is the environment: the changing climate, problems with access to clean water, desertification, melting glaciers and rising sea levels. In addition we have to fight crimes that threaten all societies around the world: terrorism, transboundary crimes and corruption.

The combination of all this constitutes a tremendous threat to humankind and to international peace and security.

There is a realisation that the only way ahead is a multilateral, international, rules-based society. The need for the rule of law was emphatically underlined in the World Summit Outcome, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2005. This need has also been recognised by the Security Council. There are constant references to the rule of law in documents emanating from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is also referred to in statements from G-20 meetings at different levels.

In civil society more and more attention is given to the need for assistance to states in order to establish societies under the rule of law. This has been on the agenda of human rights or-

ganisations for many years. It is now also a prominent feature in the work of organisations like the International Bar Association and the American Bar Association. A World Justice Project has been launched to assist states, and a world Rule of Law Index is under preparation.

Of particular interest in this context is the position taken by the InterAction Council of Former Heads of State and Government. During their annual meeting last year, the Council addressed the topic 'Restoring International Law: Legal, Political and Human Dimensions'. On 27 June 2008, the Council issued a Communiqué that among other things contains the following four recommendations:

- Acknowledging that the challenges mankind faces must be addressed through multilateral solutions within a rule-based international system;
- Insisting that states observe scrupulously their obligations under international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations and encouraging the leading powers to set an example by working within the law and abiding by it, realising that this is also in their interest;
- Underlining the importance of the Security Council exercising its mandate effectively and decisively in accordance with the responsibility granted to it by the UN Charter;
- Acknowledging that there are situations which require the Security Council to act with authority and consequence in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect;

The obvious conclusion is that we need effective international organisations and in particular an effective United Nations.

The United Nations is often criticised and it is repeatedly said that it is in need of reform. This topic was the focus of an address that I delivered in November 2006 under the title ‘Who Needs Reforming the Most – the UN or its Members?’

I reiterate what I said then, namely that the United Nations must be subject to constant reform, as any other organisation. It can always be argued that the United Nations could do better. But it is important to keep in mind that the Organisation consists of six main bodies. Four of those are composed of member states that consequently are accountable for their performance. The two others are the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat, with the Secretary-General at its head as the Organisation’s chief administrative officer.

The point that I made in my address in 2006 was that the United Nations could certainly do better, but that much of the criticism of the Organisation should be directed at its members. Furthermore, in criticising the UN one must be clear about where the criticism should be directed. Should one criticise the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Security Council, or another UN body?

Since I focused on the member states in 2006, allow me now to concentrate on the United Nations Secretariat and the international civil service, based on the views expressed by Dag Hammarskjöld in his 1961 address.

His address opens with the following lines:

In a recent article Mr. Walter Lippmann tells about an interview in Moscow with Mr. Khrushchev. According to the article, Chairman Khrushchev stated that ‘while there are neutral countries, there are no neutral men’, and the author draws the conclusion that it is now the view of the Soviet Government ‘that there can be no such thing as an impartial

civil servant in this deeply divided world, and that the kind of political celibacy which the British theory of the civil servant calls for, is in international affairs a fiction’.

For the sake of clarity, I am now going to quote Articles 97 and 98 of the UN Charter:

Article 97

The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require. The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. He shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

Article 98

The Secretary-General shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the General Assembly, of the Security Council, of the Economic and Social Council, and of the Trusteeship Council, and shall perform such other functions as are entrusted to him by these organs. The Secretary-General shall make an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization.

In his address Dag Hammarskjöld concentrates on Article 98 and concludes that this Article has substantial significance in the Charter, for it entitles the General Assembly and the Security Council to entrust the Secretary-General with tasks involving the execution of political decisions, even when this would bring him – and with him the Secretariat and its members – into the arena of possible political conflict.

He then focuses on Article 99, which entitles the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, and states:

It is Article 99 more than any other which was considered by the drafters of the Charter to have transformed the Secretary-General of the United Nations from a purely administrative official to one with an explicit political responsibility.

After further analysis Dag Hammarskjöld makes the following summary:

To sum up, the Charter laid down these essential legal principles for an international civil service:

It was to be an international body, recruited primarily for efficiency, competence and integrity, but on as wide a geographical basis as possible;

It was to be headed by a Secretary-General who carried constitutionally the responsibility to the other principal organs for the Secretariat's work;

And finally, Article 98 entitled the General Assembly and the Security Council to entrust the Secretary-General with tasks going beyond the *verba formalia* of Article 97 – with its emphasis on the administrative function – thus opening the door to a measure of political responsibility which is distinct from the authority explicitly accorded to the Secretary-General under Article 99 but in keeping with the spirit of that Article.

Dag Hammarskjöld then says that it could perhaps be surmised that virtually no one at San Francisco, where the UN Charter was negotiated in 1945, envisaged the extent to which the member states of the Organisation would assign to the Secretary-General functions which necessarily required him to take positions in highly controversial political matters. He then gives examples of such mandates in what was then recent years in

order to demonstrate how wide had been the scope of authority delegated to the Secretary-General by the Security Council and the General Assembly in matters of peace and security.

He concludes that these examples demonstrate the extent to which the member states have entrusted the Secretary-General with tasks that have required him to take action which unavoidably may have to run counter to the views of at least some member states. He then formulates the problem:

The agreement reached in the general terms of a resolution, as we have seen, no longer need to obtain when more specific issues are presented. Even when the original resolution is fairly precise, subsequent developments, previously unforeseen, may render highly controversial the action called for under the resolution.

Dag Hammarskjöld refers to the unanimous resolution authorising assistance to the central government of the Congo which in his view offered little guidance to the Secretary-General when that government split into competing centres of authority, each claiming to be the central government and each supported by different groups of member states within and outside the Security Council.

Dag Hammarskjöld notes that serious problems arise precisely because it is so often not possible for the organs themselves to resolve the controversial issue faced by the Secretary-General. When brought down to specific cases involving a clash of interests and positions, the required majority in the Security Council or General Assembly may not be available for any particular solution. He then continues:

It might be said that in this situation the Secretary-General should refuse to implement the resolution, since implementation would offend one or another group of Member

States and open him to the charge that he has abandoned the political neutrality and impartiality essential to his office. The only way to avoid such criticism, it is said, is for the Secretary-General to refrain from execution of the original resolution until the organs have decided the issue by the required majority (and, in the case of the Security Council, with the unanimous concurrence of the permanent members) or, maybe, has found another way to pass responsibility over on Governments.

But Dag Hammarskjöld takes a different position, stating that the answers seemed clear enough in law. He concludes that the responsibilities of the Secretary-General under the Charter cannot be laid aside merely because the execution of decisions by him is likely to be politically controversial. The Secretary-General remains under the obligation to check out the policies as adopted by the organs. The essential requirement according to Dag Hammarskjöld is that the Secretary-General does this on the basis of this exclusively international responsibility and not in the interest of any particular state or group of states.

He then draws attention to the ambiguity of the word 'neutrality' in such a context:

It is obvious from what I have said that the international civil servant cannot be accused of lack of neutrality simply for taking a stand on a controversial issue when this is his duty and cannot be avoided. But there remains a serious intellectual and moral problem as we move within an area inside which personal judgement must come into play. Finally, we have to deal with the question of integrity or with, if you please, a question of conscience.

Against this background, Dag Hammarskjöld maintains that the international civil servant must keep himself under the

strictest observation. He is not requested to be a neuter in the sense that he has to have no sympathies or antipathies, that there are to be no interests which are close to him in his personal capacity or that he is to have no ideas or ideals that matter for him. However, says Dag Hammarskjöld, he is requested to be fully aware of those human reactions and meticulously check himself so that they are not permitted to influence its actions. This is nothing unique, he says and ends with the rhetorical question: Is not every judge professionally under the same obligation?

The very essence of Dag Hammarskjöld's thinking in this matter appears in the penultimate paragraph of his address:

If the international civil servant knows himself to be free from such personal influences in his actions and guided solely by the common aims and rules laid down for, and by the Organisation he serves and by recognised legal principles, then he has done his duty, and then he can face the criticism which, even so, will be unavoidable. As I said, at the final last, this is a question of integrity, and if integrity in the sense of respect for law and respect for truth were to drive him into positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line, not in conflict with, his duties as an international civil servant.

This is a powerful message both to the member states and to the international civil service. It should serve as a reminder both to those who are already employed and to those who are involved with recruitment. What states and the Secretary-General should be looking for are individuals who can be deemed to observe the standards required and who do not give in to pressure. International civil servants who do not demonstrate the kind of integrity that Dag Hammarskjöld refers to will sooner or later put the functioning of the Organisation at risk.

What the Organisation needs are persons who can make assessments and decisions in accordance with the clear guidelines that follow from Dag Hammarskjöld's address. This also means that it is inevitable that the Secretary-General of the United Nations from time to time is likely to have an argument with one or more member states, notably the major powers. This is certainly not something that he or she should be looking for, but it is the unavoidable result of the Secretary-General performing the duty that follows with the position.

If this situation should occur, the member states should not simply jump to conclusions that produce confrontation but rather step back for a moment and reflect. Is this situation not, rather, a sign of health – that the Secretary-General is doing his or her job? On second thoughts, maybe the firm stand of the Secretary-General is in both the short and long term interest of the member states, including those that may have been displeased in the particular situation.

My own conclusion, based on serving two Secretaries-General from 1994 to 2004, Boutros Boutros-Ghali for three years and Kofi Annan for seven years, is that the Secretary-General needs critical advisers around him. In particular, it is important that difficult questions are discussed in depth and that different views are heard in the debate before the Secretary-General makes his or her decision. The discussions in the Senior Management Group established by Kofi Annan come to mind. From my own experience I also know that my most trusted advisers were those who assisted me by questioning my ideas, thus forcing me to take another look at the issue before making a decision.

In conclusion, Dag Hammarskjöld's address carries an important message to the present and coming generations of United Nations Secretaries-General and to the international

civil service. It is therefore important that this message does not fall into oblivion. What could be more pertinent than to recall it at a commemorative event on an anniversary of Dag Hammarskjöld's death? The message is just as relevant today as it was when it was delivered nearly 50 years ago.

Let me now close by returning to the person of Dag Hammarskjöld. If we look out of the windows of our meeting room towards the hill and the castle that once was Dag Hammarskjöld's home, we see a bust of him in the park, facing northwest – in our direction. The bust was inaugurated in December 2005 together with the Museum of Peace that is now housed in the castle. On that occasion, I reminded the audience of Dag Hammarskjöld's essay *Slottsbacken* (Castle Hill). Allow me to quote the following from his essay:

Finally comes the eve of May Day, the plain's and the town's own new year festival. In the fading light the smoke from the bonfires drifts in ribbons across the plain. As evening draws on, the hill throngs with people, and when the procession of students reaches the north tower after the bells have tolled nine, the crowd is dense. The singing swells. The traditional speech is varied anew. But hardly has the mood been created and lived in a moment of fellowship before it is dispelled and all is over. Soon the hill lies once more deserted, turned in silence towards what is to come. When the sky is already brightest in the north, you can still discern a few fires on the horizon beyond Bälunge and Åkerby churches, gleaming like fallen stars. All night long the smell of burning tar lingers in the wind, mixed with the freshness of naked, moist earth.

There is a deep symbolism in that a bust of Dag Hammarskjöld now stands on Castle Hill facing all of this – in silence towards what is to come.

Politics, Morality and Religion – The Legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld

*By Inge Lønning**

Dag Hammarskjöld was born on 29 July 1905. The combination of the date and the year inevitably evokes some associations with the place where we are gathered and the occasion which has gathered us here at Voksenåsen, the gift of the Norwegian people to Sweden, given as a token of gratitude for the support we received from our neighbours during the most difficult period of modern Norwegian history. On 29 July 1030 the event took place which has had the most long-lasting impact on our national identity: Olav Haraldsson lost his life and became – as his death was interpreted as the paradigmatic death of a martyr – the *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*. Throughout the medieval period, Olsok, the day of his martyrdom, was celebrated not only in the Nordic countries, but all over Europe. In the year 1905 the union between Sweden and Norway, established as part of the arrangement of the European political order in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars in 1814 – was brought to an end.

* The First Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture presented in the Dag Hammarskjöld Programme at Voksenåsen, 2 October 2009.

Inge Johan Lønning, born on 20 February 1938, in Fana, Norway, is a Norwegian theologian and politician (in the Conservative Party, Høyre). Dr Lønning was awarded his doctorate and became a professor of theology in 1971, holding the position of Rector at the same university from 1985–1995. He served as a member of the Norwegian Parliament from 1997 to 2009, and as president of the parliamentary house (Lagtinget) from 2005 to 2009. Lønning has been editor of the scholarly periodical *Kirke og Kultur* (Church and Culture) for a number of years, president of the Norwegian–German Society and chairman of the board of Oslo University's publishing house, Universitetsforlaget.

The two centenaries were both celebrated in 2005, the end of the union between Sweden and Norway with some hesitation – at least from the Norwegian side – and the birth of Dag Hammarskjöld with an unreserved, almost enthusiastic renewal of the interest in the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld, as presented in his works. It might even be justified to speak about a rediscovery of Dag Hammarskjöld, 48 years after his tragic death during the Congo crisis in 1961. In his introduction to the volume entitled *Att föra världens talan. Tal och uttalanden av Dag Hammarskjöld*, Kaj Falkman tells of how surprised he was when he discovered, while working on the preparation of the edition of selected speeches and statements for the upcoming centenary, that a substantial number of high-ranking officers in the United Nations' headquarters in New York had a portrait of Dag Hammarskjöld in their office alongside the portrait of the present Secretary-General. The reason for this striking preference for the second in the succession of top leaders of the organisation Falkman gives by referring to two of these high-ranking officers – the first stating that Dag Hammarskjöld was the person who defined the United Nations and provided the organisation with an ethical dimension, the second maintaining that Hammarskjöld made the United Nations an instrument for citizens rather than states. The meaning of the second statement, according to Falkman's interpretation, was to underline that during Dag Hammarskjöld's period the human rights of citizens were given priority over the rights – or rather, the political claims – of member states. 'This spirit is still alive in the United Nations', Falkman quotes, 'with a lasting impact' (Falkman, 2004: 50).

How the complex relationship between human rights and international law should be understood in an adequate way, and adapted for operational purposes in situations of conflict, remains – as we all know – an open question. The explanation quoted might not be sufficient for us to understand the unique position of Dag Hammarskjöld in the chain of

Secretaries-General of the United Nations, from Trygve Lie to Ban Ki-moon. What seems to be undisputable, however, is that if the observation is correct that the basic idea of human rights has gained a somewhat stronger position than the principle of non-intervention in the so-called internal affairs of each member state of the United Nations than it had in the 1950s and 1960s, that is a development which had its point of departure during Dag Hammarskjöld's eight years as Secretary-General (1953-1961) and is profoundly influenced by the way he defined his role as an international civil servant.

Among his successors in the chain of Secretaries-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan is the one who is most obviously influenced by Dag Hammarskjöld's understanding of the role. The programmatic statement given in his inauguration speech in 1997, that he wanted to put emphasis on the moral dimension of the efforts to be made by the United Nations, scarcely leaves any doubt about that. Had there been any doubt, the frequent public expressions of his admiration for the paradigmatic calmness and moral integrity with which Hammarskjöld met all the challenging conflicts he had to deal with as the international civil servant par excellence, would have silenced it.

Without going into further discussion on this point I simply take it for granted that Dag Hammarskjöld has and for the foreseeable future will have a unique position in the history of the United Nations. That was by no means predictable at the time of his election as the successor to Trygve Lie in 1953. On the contrary, to the extent that the special procedures for selection of candidates for the position could be compared with the procedures of the Vatican for finding a new pope, the rather anonymous civil servant coming from a rather anonymous member state, as the possible new Secretary-General, was regarded as a typical compromise candidate, an in-between figure, expected to do a low-profile job of re-

organising the crumbling administration of the United Nations. Just as some of the compromise candidates for the Holy See during the centuries have turned out to be among the strongest and most influential leaders of the Roman Catholic Church – the most recent example being John XXIII during his rather short pontificate – Dag Hammarskjöld, as soon as he had accepted the post, revealed himself as an astonishingly strong-willed and dedicated leader, defining his role as the highest-ranking civil servant of the international community in a distinct and considered way, according to his own understanding of the purpose of the United Nations. As he was expected to do, he immediately put a lot of energy into the process of reforming and streamlining the UN administration, with a considerable amount of success. But at the same time – contrary to all expectations – he turned out to be a visionary diplomatic leader, fully dedicated to the task of changing the United Nations from a post-war battlefield for preserving the frozen balance between the blocs divided by the European iron curtain, into an instrument for solving the much more complex problems of conflicting interests dividing many of the new member states emerging from the collapse of the 19th century colonial system. In a rapidly changing world Hammarskjöld clearly realised that if the United Nations was to survive as the unique instrument for peaceful solution of conflicts that it was intended to be, there was an urgent need for a shift of emphasis from the purpose of preserving the established international order – or disorder – of the Cold War period to the purpose of meeting and dealing in a constructive way with the new challenges represented by the developing countries in Africa and Asia.

It is not the Soviet Union or indeed any other Big Power who needs the United Nations for their protection, but all the others. In this sense, the Organisation is first of all their Organisation, and I deeply believe in the wisdom with which they will be able to use it and guide it. I shall

remain in my post during the term of my Office as a servant of the Organisation in the interest of all those other nations, as long as they wish me to do so. In this context the representative of the Soviet Union spoke of courage. It is very easy to resign. It is not easy to stay on. It is very easy to bow to the wishes of a Big Power. It is another matter to resist. As is well known to all members of this Assembly, I have done so before on many occasions and in many directions. If it is the wish of those nations who see in the Organisation their best protection in the present world, I shall now do so again.

This is how Dag Hammarskjöld responded to the demand for his resignation as Secretary-General, made during the most turbulent phase of the UN's involvement in the Congo crisis by his most powerful opponent, Nikita Khrushchev. The passage is an interesting example of Dag Hammarskjöld's characteristic, almost ascetic way of performing the classical art of public speaking. More interesting, however, is the substance of this condensed passage, especially when it is interpreted in its original context of one of the most dramatic General Assembly meetings in the history of the United Nations. The four short sentences – 'It is very easy to resign', 'It is not easy to stay on', 'It is very easy to bow', 'It is another matter to resist' – contain all the lessons learnt at a cost from his experiences so far, during his seven years in charge of all United Nations activities. At the same time they give a significant testimony to his seemingly unconditional and unlimited willingness to identify himself with the role of international civil servant with no obligation towards anybody or anything except the charter of the organisation he had consented to serve. The personal virtue of courage, which the Soviet leader had accused the Secretary-General of lacking, because he did not comply with his request for an immediate resignation, was obviously, for Hammarskjöld, the quintessence of the moral obligation inherent in his office. That obligation could, according

to his understanding, only be met through self-denial and a concomitant resistance towards all temptations to choose the easier way out. So, subjected to the most dramatic and demanding trial in all his years of service to the United Nations, he simply had no choice but to – in his own words – ‘stay on’ and ‘resist’. Being aware of the events that followed this acute controversy in the General Assembly we might add: stay on and resist until the bitter end.

We have arrived at the point where the most delicate of all questions arising from the study of Dag Hammarskjöld’s life and work has to be answered: to what extent did he acquire his unique position in the collective memory of the organisation he served due to the tragic end of his service in the air crash in Ndola, at the very peak of the Congo crisis, on the 18 September 1961? Undoubtedly the tragic end was felt as a significant exclamation mark after a career which was in itself remarkable. But the enigmatic fascination with the fate and the personality of Dag Hammarskjöld would probably – or almost certainly – have faded away if it had not been for the publication of his posthumous papers, which Gustaf Aulén aptly called the *White Paper* on his unfinished dialogue with God. No other prominent leader or civil servant in the 20th century, and most certainly no other Secretary-General of the United Nations, has left behind texts comparable to *Vägmarken*, or *Markings* (as Falkman rightly suggests, ‘Waymarks’ would have been a more precise translation, as the word has a hidden reference to Jeremiah 31, verse 21:

Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the highway, *even* the way *which* thou wendest.

And probably no other literary work has provoked a comparable amount of confusion and misunderstanding among its readers. Confronted with the astonishing fact that the always immaculately dressed diplomat, to his fingertips correct in his public

appearance and with the reputation of having an immense and quite extraordinary working capacity, enabling him during periods of crisis management to work up to 20 hours a day for weeks – that this most public person in the whole world, alongside this extremely demanding life had lived a secret life of his own, with God as his only counterpart and dialogue partner, and with his diary as the only witness to what he himself called ‘a sort of white book concerning my negotiations with myself – and with God’, many critics simply gave up the attempt to find a way out of their state of shock. To many of Dag Hammarskjöld’s contemporaries, especially to those who had their intellectual roots in the same corner of Europe where Hammarskjöld had spent all the formative years of his life, the publication of *Vägmärken* was an event almost as shaking as a medium-sized earthquake. They simply refused to accept what their eyes read, and ran away through the first and best emergency exit available. Some, felt the author of *Vägmärken* must have suffered from a serious mental disorder – suggestions covered a wide field of psychiatric diagnoses from an extreme kind of narcissistic egocentricity via general megalomania to the more specific type: a fully-fledged Messiah-complex. Some critics even went so far as to suggest that his universe of insane religious ideas had completely captured Hammarskjöld and, towards the end of his life, had made him so obsessed with the idea of his personal martyrdom that he had no choice but to plan for it and to stage it in a suitable way, sensational enough to serve the purpose. The air crash in the jungle on 18 September 1961, where altogether 15 lives were lost, would according to this interpretation have been the inevitable outcome of the Secretary-General’s obsession with his own messianic role.

Extreme interpretations like these are obviously – quite literally – nonsense. In a note dated 1951, which may have escaped the attention of many of his critics, the author of *Markings* makes a most appropriate comment: ‘My friend,

the Popular Psychologist, is certain in his diagnoses. And has understood nothing, nothing.’ (*Markings*, p. 73). It remains important, however, to find an answer to the question of why so many readers were led astray by Dag Hammarskjöld’s ‘white book’. Admittedly the literary form may represent a challenge: philosophical and theological reflections, frequently expressed in a condensed, aphoristic form which makes them difficult to understand. The poems, a substantial number of them in the Japanese haiku form, might be even more inaccessible. And then the bewildering ‘You’, over and over again explicitly addressed as an everyday dialogue partner and throughout implicitly present in the mind of the lonesome author. Strange and confusing to a modern reader the numerous references may be – references to the classical, medieval tradition of Christian mysticism, represented by authors like Meister Eckhart, St John of the Cross and Johann Tauler, and, during the later part of Hammarskjöld’s years as Secretary-General of the United Nations, more and more frequently to the Bible, with a special preference for the Book of Psalms, usually quoted from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

In 2005 Mads Svegfors, in his sober and very readable biography, presented Dag Hammarskjöld as the first modern Swede (*Dag Hammarskjöld. Den første moderne svensken*). To most of his contemporary readers the author of *Vägmärken* was felt to be anything but modern. To them Hammarskjöld’s white book belonged, rather, to the kind of literature that Friedrich Nietzsche called *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (views out of tune with the times). The stumbling block, which many contemporary readers were not able to overcome, was obviously the contrast with, and tremendous distance from, all their notions of modernity and the modern world. They were quite simply unable to understand how a top diplomat and cosmopolitan political leader, with the reputation of being an outstanding intellectual, with a scholarly training

which could have opened any kind of academic career to him, had been living in a kind of metaphysical mental universe, in an invisible world apparently without any possible link to the visible world of harsh political realities which all the time demanded his full presence and ability to make tough decisions.

In the Nordic countries the 1950s and 1960s were the period when the long anti-metaphysical tradition, which since the 1920s had gradually grown stronger, reached its climax. The positivistic philosophy of Axel Hägerström, whom Hammarskjöld met as a student in Uppsala, had a dominant position. In 1960 Herbert Tingsten, in a book which was generally met with a positive response, could proclaim the death of all ideologies and the start of a new era of rationality, where only the weight of the better arguments would be decisive in political discourse. On the western side of the iron curtain the process of secularisation had come to the edge of secularism. On the eastern side atheism had already for decades been the dominant public doctrine and continued to be so until the collapse of the Soviet empire. I still remember a visit to St Petersburg – then still Leningrad – in 1975, where I discovered, much to my surprise, that the famous Isak Cathedral had been turned into – in the dark basement – a museum of all the horrors of church history, and then, as the visitor ascended to the daylight of the first floor, a gallery demonstrating all the impressive achievements of modern, scientific atheism.

In the historic context where *Vägmärken* was first published, it was inevitably met with scepticism, and considered some sort of alien substance. Yet, to those who had followed the development of Dag Hammarskjöld closely, there was no real reason to be surprised by his affinity with Christian faith. In a broadcast programme entitled 'This I believe' Hammarskjöld had, at the time that he started his international career

in New York, quite bluntly stated that he had never abandoned the principles and ideals of his childhood, despite the fact that the world in which he grew up might seem extremely different from the world of today, 48 years later. On the contrary, he states, experience and reflection had made him realise their lasting validity and relevance. On this journey he had recently – an attentive reading of *Vägmärken* reveals that in the years immediately preceding the turning point in 1953 Hammarskjöld had been struggling with an existential mid-life crisis – arrived at a level of clarity and confidence that enabled him not only to fully understand the content of his spiritual heritage, but to make it the personal confession of his own belief. To the ancestors on his father's side Hammarskjöld ascribes the virtues of commitment, integrity and a strong sense of social accountability; to the ancestors on his mother's side the belief that all men, in the radical sense of the gospels, share in the same dignity as children of God and should be met and treated in accordance with that. Further, he defines, with an explicit reference to St John of the Cross, faith as 'the unification of God with the soul', as a state of mind, that can only be expressed in an adequate way through religious language, which is distinctively different from the language we use to describe the world we perceive through our senses and are capable of analysing by means of logical deduction. Without compromising the ideals of intellectual honesty that are the very key to a mature mind, Hammarskjöld states, he is now compromising the faith in which he was brought up as his own spiritual property, taken on as a free, personal decision. The only authority besides St John of the Cross that is explicitly referred to in this brief and very comprehensive speech, is Albert Schweitzer, whose ethics Hammarskjöld finds to be in perfect harmony with the ideals of unconditional commitment to the service of all fellow human beings, and whose critical examination of the gospel tradition and the German *Leben Jesu-Forschung* provides modern readers with a key to understanding the historical Jesus

and the world of the gospels. Hammar skjöld summarises the decisive discovery made during his spiritual journey by once more pointing to the lesson he has learnt through the study of the great medieval mystics: for human beings self-denial is the only way to a personal identity, realised through creative acts of love towards fellow human beings. The contemplative life and the life of political action are not opposites, but should be understood as complementary to each other.

In 1954, in an address to the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, Dag Hammar skjöld gives an interesting account of how he understands the political relevance of the Christian faith. With a reference to the exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount not to worry about what is going to happen tomorrow he underlines that all efforts to promote peace should be carried out with the patience that characterises people who are not anxious about the outcome, but are acting in the calm unselfishness of confident faith. Referring to St Paul 'For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God' (Romans 3,23), taken from the preparatory papers for the conference, Hammar skjöld concludes his address by interpreting the central content of the Christian message, the Cross, not as a dividing, but as a uniting message: 'Understood in this way, the Cross, in spite of the fact that it is the unique fact on which the Christian churches are building their hope, should not divide those who confess the Christian faith from others, but should rather be the strain in their lives which enables them to reach out their hands to people of other faiths, sensing the kind of universal brotherhood which one day we are hoping to see in a world of truly united nations.' The same address also draws a clear distinction between the task of religious communities and the task of the United Nations, understanding them not as competing, but as complementary institutions: 'The Churches are guardians of and spokespeople for the deepest beliefs and the loftiest dreams of man. The United

Nations, on the other hand, is an organisation for continuous diplomatic negotiations concerning concrete political issues, providing also for international administrative action in the economic and social fields. Yet, in spite of all differences in character and responsibility, the Churches and the United Nations have an aim in common and a field of action where they work side by side.’

The common aim and the shared field of action in the following passage is defined by a reference to the answer Hammarskjöld had given to a youngster of 16 who asked there was no reference to God in the Charter of the UN. ‘In my reply I drew his attention to the Preamble of the Charter where the Nations express their ‘faith in the dignity and worth of the human person’ and pledge themselves “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.” I felt sure that he saw here an expression of what, in the faith which was his, was recognised as the will of God: that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. He could not expect a document which should serve as a basis for world cooperation to go further in the direction he had in mind. The United Nations must recognise and respect all the different creeds and attitudes represented by its Member Nations.’ The conclusion presented to the most representative body of the Christian churches is as comprehensive as it could be: ‘The United Nations stay outside – necessarily outside – all confessions but it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith. As such it is inspired by what unites, not by what divides the great religions of the world.’

Interpreters with a scholarly training in the history of philosophy and theology have given widely different assessments of Dag Hammarskjöld’s understanding of the Christian tradition. The former professor at Lund and bishop of Strängnäs, Gustaf Aulén, deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Lutheran Church of Sweden which Hammarskjöld in

his 'This I believe'-speech embraces as the heritage to which he wants to remain faithful, tends to confirm in his thorough interpretation of *Vägmärken* (*Dag Hammarskjölds bitbok. Tvivel och tro i 'Vägmärken'*, 1970) the validity of Hammarskjöld's own assessment and generally finds his theological ideas to be consistent with mainstream (Swedish) Lutheran spirituality. Henry van Dusen on the other hand, in his study *Dag Hammarskjöld – the Statesman* published in 1967, maintains that Hammarskjöld's understanding of the Christian tradition is remarkably unorthodox and almost without any features of real influence from the spiritual heritage he wanted to be loyal to. To me, Aulén's assessment seems more plausible than van Dusen's. 'Orthodox' is among the most ambiguous terms circulating in theological discourse. The validity of judgments on the supposed degree of orthodoxy of theological statements obviously depends on how the term is defined as well as the ideological context in which it occurs. To van Dusen, to be 'unorthodox' is the more commendable attitude in matters of religion, simply because the contrasting term 'orthodox' is popularly, but rather narrowly and superficially associated with the literal reproduction of authorised creeds and doctrinal statements. Admittedly, such statements scarcely occur in *Vägmärken* and in Hammarskjöld's public speeches, but that does not mean that the interpreter is free to draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of silence. Only in contexts where the absence of 'orthodox' statements is striking might the reader have a good reason to miss them. I can hardly see that it is reasonable to deal with Hammarskjöld's works as if they belonged to that kind of setting. To me it seems more reasonable to expect that the author of such works would be eager to avoid reproducing doctrinal formulas.

As far as I can see, Hammarskjöld, in his understanding of the central elements of the Christian tradition, is as orthodox as anyone could rightly wish for. A passage from *Vägmärken*

dated 24 February 1957, which seems to have escaped the attention of most interpreters, might be eminently suitable to elucidate this. The subject put on the agenda is the most obsolete and alien part of Christian doctrine since the age of enlightenment, the doctrine of Original Sin. The passage reveals that it was not by chance that Hammarskjöld in his address to the World Council of Churches three years earlier recommended the statement of St Paul ('For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God', Romans 3,23) as the most solid basis for unconditional solidarity among human beings:

*We can reach the point where it becomes possible for us to recognize and understand Original Sin, that dark counter-center of evil in our nature – that is to say, though it is not our nature, it is *of* it – that something within us which rejoices when disaster befalls the very cause we are trying to serve, or misfortune overtakes even those whom we love.*

Life in God is not an escape from this, but the way to gain full insight concerning it. It is not our depravity which forces a fictitious religious explanation upon us, but the experience of religious reality which forces the 'Night Side' out into the light.

It is when we stand in the righteous all-seeing light of love that we can dare to look at, admit, and *consciously* suffer under this something in us which wills disaster, misfortune, defeat to everything outside the sphere of our narrowest self-interest. So a living relation to God is the necessary precondition for the self-knowledge which enables us to follow a straight path, and so be victorious over ourselves, forgiven by ourselves. (*Markings*, p. 149)

This passage clearly demonstrates that Aulén is right when he draws a parallel with Martin Luther's definition of sin as *incurvatio in se*, man's being huddled up in himself. Luther is not among the authorities Hammarskjöld refers to in *Vägmärken*. As a matter of fact there is no sign that Hammarskjöld ever read him either. Nevertheless, his spiritual presence is unmistakable in central passages where Hammarskjöld is dealing with basic elements of Christian tradition. The echo of Luther's paradoxical understanding of *libertas christiana* as unconditional freedom and unconditional service can at the same time hardly be ignored. Hammarskjöld's deeply felt personal understanding of the role of the civil servant as a vocation behind which God is the invisible author/employer would not have been possible without Luther's revolutionary replacement of the medieval Latin term *vocation* with the German *Beruf*. Vocation was a narrow technical term, used exclusively as a label for *religiosi* – that is, priests and members of religious orders – to mark their status as different from that of *laici* – that is, all other citizens living the worldly everyday sort of life. For Luther, *Beruf* has exactly the opposite function; it is intended to comprise all kinds of professions and all human efforts to improve living conditions in this world, understanding them as *larva dei* – that is, as masks or social roles, behind which God hides his creative Providence. Dag Hammarskjöld's understanding of his role as a civil servant of global human society, accountable solely to God as his commissioner, would scarcely have been an option without 'Luther's doctrine on vocation', as a contemporary Swedish theologian labelled it in his dissertation (Gustaf Wingren, *Luthers lära om kallelsten*, 1942).

In his interpretation of *Vägmärken*, Aulén also draws parallels with Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45). The first does not add very much to the understanding of Hammarskjöld, simply because the process of, to use Hammarskjöld's way of speaking, negotiations with

himself and God, is in Kierkegaard's case without any link to a worldly life of professional and social responsibility. Bonhoeffer's posthumous *Resistance and Devotion* (*Widerstand und Ergebung*, 1952), containing letters and notes written during his two-year imprisonment in Berlin towards the end of World War II, offers a substantial number of similarities with regard to reflections on sacrifice, search for meaning, and a new understanding of worldly holiness realised through acts of political responsibility.

Let us try to come to a conclusion with regard to Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy in the world of today. During the Norwegian electoral campaign this autumn I attended a discussion where the panellists were supposed to come up with a reasonable answer to the question 'Too much religion in politics?' I regret to say that the way of presenting the problem is almost as popular as it is misleading. Some years ago I remember a similar debate in an academy in Schleswig-Holstein under the heading *Wie viel Religion verträgt und braucht die Politik?* ('How much religion does politics bear and need?'). I don't remember the answers given by the panellists— including my own — probably because silly questions could not be expected to generate more than silly answers. The five decades which have passed since 1960 have brought rapid and spectacular turns in the market for religion, as well as for political ideologies. Tingsten's 1960 vision of a rational society, once and for all immune against ideology, was definitely washed overboard already in 1968, when waves of revolutionary Marxist enthusiasm among the younger age group made most institutions representing Western rationality totter. At the same time actual, existing socialism as represented by eastern Marxist regimes, was slowly crumbling towards the end of the 1980s, accelerating the process of decomposition that ended in a symbolic manner with the fall of the Berlin wall. (I still remember an aside made by a Polish professor at a European university conference during

the period of transition: 'Our experience with the Marxist system', he said, 'is that it has no potential whatsoever when it comes to changing the present or shaping the future; in return it has unlimited potential when it comes to changing the past'. In academic theology pet subjects of the 1960s and 1970s, like 'the death of God' and secularisation, interpreted as the final stage of human emancipation – the global village in the shape of 'secular city' (Harvey Cox) – were replaced during the 1980s and 1990s by 'the return of religion'/'return of God', 'the feast of fools' (once more Harvey Cox) and during the 1990s, by a rising wave of religious fundamentalism, inside as well as outside of Christianity. Today – after 9/11 – the merger of religious and political fanaticism as represented in so-called 'radical Islam' has pasted the term religion with unpleasant connotations like 'terrorism' and 'suicide bombers'. And the seemingly never-ending 'war on terrorism' is coming close to its terminal stage of fatigue, the only element left unaffected being the root causes of the phenomenon that the campaign was intended to eradicate.

We have come to the final waymark of this lecture, the first in – let us hope – a long succession of Dag Hammarskjöld lectures here at Voksenåsen. This very autumn of 2009 the United Nations is also heading for one of its important waymarks, the world summit on climate change in Copenhagen. Most certainly the coincidence is accidental; nevertheless, it might look like an intention. Allow me therefore to draw a parallel with another accidental experience, which dates from a visit to the University of Tartu in the early 1990s. The university was founded in 1632, in the period when Estonia was still part of the Swedish empire, and had for centuries had as its trademark a huge equestrian statue of its founder, Gustaf Adolf. When Estonia was annexed by the Soviet empire, the statue had been melted down and re-cast as a statue of Lenin, and now everybody was beaming with joy at the prospect of another melting-down process in favour of a re-

re-caste royal Swede on horseback. During my visit I had the privilege of attending the solemn conferring of doctoral degrees and the festivities in honour of the new doctors, among them a young mathematician from Minsk. When he realised that I represented the University of Oslo, he just *had to* tell me that his doctoral thesis was on the Norwegian mathematician Sophus Lie (1842-99) – one of those 19th century Norwegian scientists who are famous in the eastern part of Europe and almost forgotten in Norway. On the basis of the insight won through years of thorough study of the works of Sophus Lie he insisted on proclaiming his Norwegian hero ‘The Mathematician for the 21st century’.

Reading *Vägmärken* and speeches from Dag Hammarskjöld’s period as Secretary-General of the United Nations anew, at the distance of half a century, has been for me an experience which reminds me of the title of a well-known post-war novel by Sigurd Hoel: *A rendezvous with years forgotten* (*Stevnemøte med glemte år*, 1954). Without stressing the comparison with my enthusiastic friend from Belarus – after all I am 50 years older – my reading of Hammarskjöld’s works has encouraged me to take the risk and proclaim him as ‘The Politician for the 21st Century’. Should anyone be doubtful and raise the objection that this is wishful thinking, my answer would be: of course it is. But it is wishful thinking based on a number of sound arguments, among which I will restrict myself to the most evident:

1. The world of the 21st century is badly in need of a renewed basis for political leadership and common standards for judgment on how power is exercised at all levels, from the smallest local community to the summits of the United Nations.
2. Common standards for judgment on how power is exercised could only be moral standards, resting on common human morality, expressed with unbeatable accuracy in

the sentence ‘We regard it as self evident that all men are created equal’ (The preamble to the United States’ Declaration of Independence, 1776).

3. The principle of the equal dignity of all human beings is the indispensable presupposition for the idea of human rights, which has its complement in the recognition of human obligations, in condensed form expressed in the commandment of love.
4. To be a durable guiding star for the world of politics the triangle of human dignity/human rights/human obligation needs to be strengthened by the recognition of mankind as a community of shared responsibility and shared guilt, expressed in the shortest possible formula in St Paul’s statement, ‘For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of god’ (Romans 3,23).
5. Morality, regardless of whether it is brought to awareness of the individual or not, has a religious dimension. Among models of ethical reflection a renewal of the ancient ethics of virtue would be the most promising alternative to take care of that dimension, which is indispensable as a bulwark against the pitfall of moralism.
6. As bodyguard of the religious dimension of morality, religion could never be the source of hatred, harassment, acts of terror or other violations of human rights. Neither could it be a speaking tube or an ally of fanaticism and disintegration.
7. On the contrary, the only force which is likely to be able to fight out a war on terrorism without being defeated through exhaustion is religion.

This is the Reader’s Digest version of the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld, based on my 2009 rendezvous with his waymarks. Neither hindsight nor wishful thinking should be despised by anyone of us – after all it might turn out to be the only kind of wisdom available. The vocational understanding of political leadership as the role of a – strictly speaking – *civil*

servant, has most certainly not lost a single bit of its relevance in the 21st century or for the 21st century. An apocryphal saying of Martin Luther's – it is not found anywhere in the more than 100 volumes of his collected works – runs like this: 'If I knew that this world was going to perish tomorrow, today I would still have planted an apple tree in my garden.' Apocryphal sayings may convey the core message of an author just as well as the genuine ones – sometimes even better. If I am justified in counting Dag Hammarskjöld among the close heirs of the spiritual legacy of Martin Luther, we might just as well attribute the apocryphal saying to him and keep it in mind as part of *his* legacy.

In any case: the picture of the apple tree in the garden, planted on the eve before the Day of Judgment is most certainly among the pictures worth being kept in mind – in any mind which is still striving to remain sound.

Dag Hammarskjöld's
zeitgemäße Betrachtungen
– Reflections on Inge Lønning's Dag
Hammarskjöld Lecture

By *Henning Melber**

It is a tremendous privilege to be with you tonight for the first Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture at Voksenåsen just delivered so eloquently by Inge Lønning. It is an even bigger honour to have been invited to share a few additional thoughts on this lecture with the distinguished presenter (who I understand is among Norway's leading intellectuals) and those attending this august event.

In my view Inge Lønning could not have chosen a more suitable thematic focus to demonstrate the simple complexity of Hammarskjöld and its relevance for us today. If you wonder whether 'simple complexity' is a contradiction in terms, then let me clarify that I think that complexities do not have to be complicated. Just as Hammarskjöld did not separate politics from nature and the arts, his political convictions and the politics guided by them could not be separated from morality and religion. He was a deeply spiritual man. Those who associate this with obscurantism or mysticism not of this world, however, are not only doing an injustice to Hammarskjöld as a

* Presented as a comment to the first Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in the Dag Hammarskjöld Programme at Voksenåsen, 2nd October 2009.

Henning Melber (born 1950) obtained a PhD in Political Science in 1980 and a *venia legendi* ("the right to teach") in Development Studies in 1993. He was Director of the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) in Windhoek (1992–2000) and Research Director at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala/Sweden (2000–2006), where he is the Executive Director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation since then.

political role model who set the standard for all following him in this post with its ‘mission impossible’. They also deny the late Secretary-General of the United Nations the full recognition of his guiding principles, values and norms.

I am grateful to Inge Lønning for putting the record straight. Dag Hammarskjöld was indeed strongly influenced by the socialising environment of his parents and the particular spirit so strongly present then in Uppsala. He summarised and publicly presented his confessions most impressively in the radio programme ‘This I believe’, broadcast in 1954, as Inge Lønning has described. Faith, Hammarskjöld then insisted, ‘is a state of the mind and the soul’. And the belief he inherited was

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. (Falkman 2005: 58)

In the same text that Hammarskjöld wrote for the radio, he translates the living of such convictions, the active practising of these values, into the word Love. Love, defined as an overflowing of the strength that fills individuals living in true self-oblivion, as an unhesitant fulfilment of duty in an unreserved acceptance of life – whether it brings toil, suffering or happiness (Falkman 2005: 59).

Inge Lønning shares with us more evidence of this strong faith, which guided Hammarskjöld’s views and actions of Hammarskjöld. He shows us that a strong belief in fundamental values transcends narrow political ideologies and translates into almost revolutionary perseverance when lived as a consequence. This is documented maybe most spectacularly in Hammarskjöld’s famous statement delivered on 3 October 1960 in the UN General Assembly in reply to the

Soviet Union's demand to resign. Inge Lønning rightly uses it as illustration to make the point that conviction is political and lasting. As he points out, within such an understanding vocation turns into *Beruf*, and finally into *Berufung* (maybe best translated as 'calling').

I could not agree more with the speaker's suggestion that although Friedrich Nietzsche would most likely have judged Hammarskjöld's posthumously published personal notes as *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (views out of tune with the times) they are in fact very much *zeitgemäß* (in tune with the times). His morality and religion, I repeat, were political and translated into politics which set the norm for every Secretary-General following him. When Hammarskjöld understands the United Nations as an 'instrument of faith', then this must be understood as a commitment to fundamental human values and norms guiding the struggle for a better life for all. It is a deeply secular agenda that cannot be seen as detached from the spiritual signposts guiding his mission. A mission indeed it was. While Inge Lønning put the emphasis in exploring the framework for this mission more on the ethical dimensions guided by religion, I would like to refer in the remaining time to some of the political dimensions this implied. For his own understanding of the role of an international civil servant – a concept he shaped, which has lasted until today as the ultimate criterion for service in the United Nations system – he already insisted in an address at John Hopkins University in Baltimore on 14 June 1955 that 'many ethical problems take on a new significance and our need to give sense to our lives exceeds the inherited standards' (Falkman 2005: 64). He points to the need that inherited and conventional ideas will not protect us and allow us to live lazily:

Intellectually and morally, international service therefore requires the courage to admit that you, and those you represent, are wrong when you find them to be wrong,

even in the face of a weaker adversary, and courage to defend what is your conviction even when you are facing the threats of powerful opponents. But while such an outlook exposes us to conflicts, it also provides us with a source of inner security; for it will give us ‘self-respect for our shelter’. (Ibid: 65)

Already two years in office, then, he mapped out what he continued to practise as an international civil servant: the virtue of uncompromising integrity in the execution of the mandate and the pursuance of the course. On 31 October 1956, during the Suez crisis, he stated before the Security Council in no uncertain terms that in his view ‘the discretion and impartiality...imposed on the Secretary-General... may not degenerate into a policy of expediency’ (Falkman 2005: 120–121). In this he articulated a belief that he would later reiterate in his introduction to the Annual Report of the UN for 1959–1960:

It is my firm conviction that any result bought at the price of a compromise with the principles and ideals of the Organization, either by yielding to force, by disregard of justice, by neglect of common interests or by contempt for human rights, is bought at too high a price. That is so because a compromise with its principles and purposes weakens the Organization in a way representing a definite loss for the future that cannot be balanced by any immediate advantage achieved. (Falkman 2005: 71)

Throughout his eight years in office Dag Hammarskjöld lived what he put into a final legacy on ‘The International Civil Service in Law and in Fact’ in his address at Oxford University on 30 May 1961 – not much more than a hundred days before his untimely death. As he stated then:

...the international civil servant cannot be accused of lack of neutrality simply for taking a stand on a controversial issue when this is his duty and cannot be avoided. But there remains a serious intellectual and moral problem as we move within an area inside which personal judgement must come into play. Finally, we have to deal with the question of integrity or with, if you please, a question of conscience. (Quoted from Hans Corell's speech in this compilation)

And he continued:

...if integrity in the sense of respect for law and respect for truth were to drive him into positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line, not in conflict with, his duties as an international civil servant. (Ibid.)

From his first years in office Dag Hammarskjöld won respect and recognition for being a mediator guided by such integrity. He was suspicious of any justification of expediency. He strongly believed in humanity and dialogue among opponents, based on mutual respect and the search for common ground, but resisted the temptation to opt for a pragmatic and easy pseudo-solution devoid of the fundamental values that ought to be respected. In this context his exchanges with Martin Buber are revealing.¹ These days we might call it the recognition of otherness in a world of diversity. But at the same time he also felt strongly that otherness does not prevent parties from finding a shared basis for the sustainable future of mankind.

1 The Foundation has documented this important aspect of Hammarskjöld's ethics and convictions in its occasional paper series *Critical Currents* (no. 8, January 2010), which deals with the exchange between Hammarskjöld and Buber (Marin 2010); see also Fröhlich (2008: 103–116 and 2002: 192–211).

Hammar skjöld was guided by efforts to bring more justice and less violation of human rights to this world within the institutionalised framework of a UN system which seeks to enhance the meaning and practical relevance of the different charters for the implementation of a variety of human rights. Already half a century ago he shared the commitment to use the global governance framework for the promotion of the wellbeing of the people and not their rulers.

He was aware of the long road to a global contract which would not only formulate but also execute and implement shared responsibility over matters of general human concern. In an address on 1 May 1960 at the University of Chicago he made a sobering but realistic assessment, which reflects political realities within the system of the not so united nations until today:

Those who advocate world government, and this or that special form of world federalism, often present challenging theories and ideas, but we, like our ancestors, can only press against the receding wall which hides the future. It is by such efforts, pursued to the best of our ability, more than by the construction of ideal patterns to be imposed upon society, that we lay the basis and pave the way for the society of the future. (Falkman 2005: 164)

Inge Lønning shared with us insights into Hammar skjöld's battle with himself and the duties and obligations (if not the plight) that his Protestant ethic required him to face. The ethical, moral and spiritual (some would call it religious) compass was what guided his relentless efforts to map the challenges and opportunities paving the way for a society of the future. This way is long, and full of obstacles. It requires patience, perseverance and many more virtues to handle the setbacks and disappointments without capitulation or resignation. Dag Hammar skjöld, who embodied many of these

virtues in his personal beliefs, was aware of the time required for this engagement to bear fruits. As he stated in his address at New York University on 20 May 1956:

... we are still seeking ways to make our international institutions fulfill more effectively the fundamental purpose expressed in Woodrow Wilson's words – 'to be the eye of the nations to keep watch upon the common interest'.

I have no doubt that forty years from now we shall also be engaged in the same pursuit. How could we expect otherwise? World organization is still a new adventure in human history. It needs much perfecting in the crucible of experiences and there is no substitute for time in that respect. (Falkman 2005: 67–68)

Fifty years after these words, we still have not reached the desired goal. Let's hope that time is not running out. We have certainly come to a stage in the history of humankind which requires even more urgent measures to secure a future for men, women and their children on this earth. Dag Hammarskjöld had faith in the future of mankind, as he had trust in the moral compass of people. As recorded in the transcript of extemporaneous remarks at the UN Correspondents Association Luncheon in his honour on 9 April 1958 he maintained a

... belief and the faith that the future will be all right because there will always be enough people to fight for a decent future.

He also believed firmly that

...there are enough people who are solidly engaged in this fight and who are strong enough and dedicated enough to guarantee its success. (Falkman 2005: 51–52)

I have reasons to assume that not only Inge Lønning but also the others here today have gathered because they are among the people active in the spirit of the late Dag Hammarskjöld and his vision of a better world. A world he did not see come about. Among the many, almost painful entries in his *Vägmärken* (which indeed deserved a better title in English than *Markings*) is his only rhymed poem of 3 December 1960. It is with those words of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations that I would like to end:

Vägen,
 Du skall följa den.
 Lyckan,
 Du skall glömma den.
 Kalken,
 Du skall tömma den.
 Smärtan,
 Du skall dölja den.
 Svaret,
 Du skall lära det.
 Slutet,
 Du skall bära det.²

2 W. H. Auden found himself unable to rhyme the English version and therefore also included the original. His translation is: 'The road, You shall follow it. The fun, You shall forget it. The cup, You shall empty it. The pain, You shall conceal it. The truth, You shall be told it. The end, You shall endure it.' (Hammarskjöld 1993: 177)

References

Falkman, Kaj (ed.) (2005), *To Speak for the World. Speeches and Statements by Dag Hammarskjöld*, Stockholm: Atlantis.

Fröhlich, Manuel (2002), *Dag Hammarskjöld und die Vereinten Nationen. Die politische Ethik des UNO-Generalsekretärs*, Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich: Schöningh.

Fröhlich, Manuel (2008), *Political Ethics and the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General*, Oxon and New York: Routledge (short version of the German volume).

Hammarskjöld, Dag (1993), *Markings*, New York: Ballantine (16th edition).

Marin, Lou (2010), *Can We Safe True Dialogue in an Age of Mistrust? The Encounter between Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber*, Uppsala: The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (Critical Currents, no. 8).

Dag Hammarskjöld was a world citizen. During his period as Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1953 until his death in 1961 he became known as an extremely efficient and dedicated international civil servant. Dag Hammarskjöld emphasised that a major task for the UN is to assert the interests of small countries in relation to the major powers. He also shaped the UN's mandate to establish peace-keeping forces. Before he was appointed UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld held high positions as a civil servant in the Swedish government. Dag Hammarskjöld also had strong cultural interests and was a member of the Swedish Academy of letters. His posthumously published book *Markings* has become a classic.