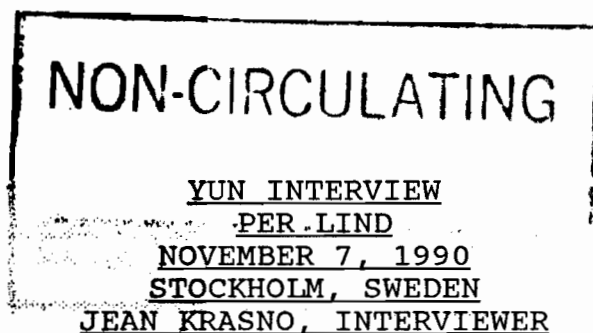


United Nations Oral History Project

**Per Lind
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Dag Hammarskjöld
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JK: To start, Mr. Lind, I understand that you were at the UN in the Secretariat in 1953. Could you explain a little bit about how you first became involved in the UN and your relationship with Dag Hammarskjöld?

Lind: When the news came to Stockholm that Dag Hammarskjöld had been elected or chosen by the Security Council for the Secretary-Generalship, it was quite surprising news for everybody in this country including the victim himself, Dag.

JK: So, Dag Hammarskjöld was not aware of this before hand.

Lind: He was not aware of it. He might have had a hunch, but I doubt it. The news arrived while he was having dinner with some friends in Stockholm and it came through the news agencies first. It was the first of April, so the jokes were that this was this an April fools prank. But, from the moment that the message had come through, he felt that it was serious business. In looking back one has the impression that he was quite prepared for it. He immediately set his goals and started. At that time I served in the Foreign Office. I had been in Washington between 1947 and 1951 at our Embassy there as a secretary. In the late '40s Dag Hammarskjöld came out to Washington a couple of times for negotiations with the Americans on various matters.

JK: What was Dag Hammarskjöld's position at that time?

Lind: When he first came he was Undersecretary General in the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was later a member of the cabinet. Earlier he had been Undersecretary in the Treasury. He was very much involved then in international discussions. In the OECD meetings in Paris he acted for the government. It was there that he became internationally known for his knowledge of economic matters and his intellectual capacity. That is probably the background for his name coming up in the discussions on the Secretary-Generalship. I don't remember it quite but I think it was the Americans who proposed him. It was a Frenchman who put forward his name, but I think that was more of a formality.

On my return to Stockholm in 1951, I was assigned to the Council of Europe affairs in the Ministry and was in the field of his responsibilities. So, I cooperated with him. That's how I got to know him, although I had met him in Washington on his visits. On that day, the first of April, he asked me to come to his office and he said, "look, now this has happened and I want you to come along to New York." As I used to travel with him when he went on missions I found this natural. But, he added, "I want you also to stay on there and be my assistant if that can be arranged." He was being careful not thinking that he could decide that yet! I was taken by complete surprise, of course, but immediately said, "yes, all right."

JK: So, you went with him right away.

Lind: Yes. He was to be sworn in on the tenth of April and we went over a couple of days before. My involvement with Dag Hammarskjöld's Secretary-Generalship was that I was his personal assistant during his first three years. We discovered the United Nations together. He had never been interested in the UN before. So, he started from absolute scratch. The arrangement which was made for me in the Secretariat was that I was to be his personal assistant with direct access to him and belong to the executive office on the 38th floor. My boss there was Andrew Cordier, who was the top man under the Secretary-General. I belonged to the part of his staff that had responsibility for the General Assembly. So, I was personal assistant to the Secretary-General and member of the General Assembly staff in the Executive Office under Cordier.

JK: In that assignment, then, did you discuss General Assembly matters with Dag Hammarskjöld?

Lind: I discussed the General Assembly mainly with Cordier. He was in charge of that and he had a team. Brian Urquhart was one of them. We had meetings with Cordier and we got our instructions from him on many matters that the SG did not have to deal with directly. I dealt with everything that had a Swedish connection for the SG or required contact with Sweden. I was also handling correspondence and contacts in connection with his public appearances.

There was daily contact, very close contact with Hammarskjöld as he had with almost everybody on the 38th floor. It was a very intimate team.

JK: In that he had not been very involved in the United Nations before that, what did he see as the role of the United Nations once he did get involved?

Lind: There I think you would have to go to the sources. That is richly documented. As the very pragmatic person that he was, he saw that the role of the United Nations could not exceed the role given the United Nations by the Charter and what governments were prepared to give the United Nations. It was quite clear. He was no fool. He didn't come and say that he was going to work for some supernational authority, or something like that. He was a realist. He knew that it wasn't politically possible to go that far.

JK: Was he a very religious man?

Lind: That is a hard question. He has given the answer himself in two ways: first, during his first year, in response to a request by Ed Murrow, the broadcaster, for an interview to be published in a book with contributions from various persons called This I believe. In that book, This I Believe, Dag stated his beliefs in a way that thoroughly answered the question about his religion. Then, you have Markings, the book that was published after his death which is religious if you want to call it

that, clearly spiritual. Markings has been discussed and interpreted in many ways by theologians and others in books and articles. It is all there to be judged. One should not forget This I Believe. That piece is in my view essential in the religious context. He was not a church goer. He would visit a church for its beauty, its stillness, or the music, but he rarely attended services. I don't think he believed in that at all. That was very clear, which I think might surprise people who read Markings.

JK: Right, many people felt he was a very spiritual person. Some even thought that he felt spiritually guided in some way.

Lind: He called Markings his negotiations with himself and with God. He could be guided, but it was through direct guidance from God not through any church or priest or anything like that.

JK: Did he ever discuss any of those thoughts with you?

Lind: No, never, and with hardly anyone which meant, of course, when Markings was published, we were surprised because here was a side of Dag that we had not gotten to know, even his close friends. That could have been our fault, but at least it shows that he didn't discuss these things.

JK: So, there was a part of him that was very private.

Lind: Very private, indeed.

JK: Were you and your wife good friends with him socially?

Lind: Yes, very much so. Our children were, too. He had a weekend house in Brewster, New York. We, the whole Lind family, often spent the weekends with him there. Yes, both my wife and I were good friends with him.

JK: Did you travel with him when he went on specific missions?

Lind: Yes, quite a lot but not always. We made an annual visit to Europe, Geneva, during the summer. Mainly I was one of his team on his visit to Peking in 1955.

JK: Were you involved in the issues around the Middle East?

Lind: Well, the Middle East issues were always there, but the major crisis was the Suez crisis in 1956 and at that time I was not with the UN. I left at the end of 1955 to rejoin the Swedish foreign service. He had asked me to stay on and it was a difficult decision for me. It was wonderful to be an international civil servant, having left the national service, but the reality was in practical terms pretty hard. It meant that the kids had to live in New York, go to American schools, etc. But they were Swedish nationals and not Americans, nor did they have any international status at all. I saw some identity difficulties. So, I decided to return to Stockholm and that's why I was not directly involved any longer. But, I was in charge of UN affairs in the Foreign Office and kept in close touch for some years, in

fact, through the rest of Hammarskjold's life, although in another capacity with the UN and its SG.

JK: Were you involved in the Suez crisis?

Lind: Yes, very much so. Sweden was one of the nations asked to contribute forces and we had to decide on the resolutions in the UN about setting it up. We became extremely involved on this side.

JK: That was the first time the UN had sent forces in anywhere.

Lind: The first time. The UN had not had that kind of structure. The whole idea of this kind of forces during this crisis was very much Dag Hammarskjold's and Lester Pearson's. They invented this system.

JK: Did Hammarskjold, then, request the Swedish to provide forces?

Lind: Yes.

JK: And this is something that your country was very interested in doing?

Lind: Yes, and we responded positively and promptly and have ever since been very active contributors to the peace forces. I think that the fact that Hammarskjold was the Secretary-General must have meant alot to promote Swedish interest to be helpful on top of our general attitude of strongly supporting the United Nations.

JK: Were there other reasons for Sweden to become involved? Sweden has continued to contribute to peace-keeping

forces. Are there other reasons that Sweden would be interested in continuing this policy?

Lind: No, support for the UN and to contribute to peace are the sole motives.

JK: So, you were involved in the discussions establishing these forces.

Lind: Yes, I was because that was my job. We had to prepare the government for all the resolutions that were taken in the UN and implement them through cooperation with our military people and others.

JK: Do you recall what some of the issues were around setting up the force?

Lind: There was one famous UN paper which was the basis for the whole thing. Hammarskjöld and Pearson and the UN Secretariat laid down the principles about how things should be established and organized. That was done it two nights and then sent to the governments. That was approved here and on that basis we gave our support. These were clear principles and we never had any difficulty cooperating with the UN in peace-keeping operations, except in the Lebanon crisis.

JK: In what way? What were the difficulties there?

Lind: That was when in 1958 the US forces landed on the beach outside Beirut. The Swedish Foreign Minister thought that when that happened the UN peace-keeping observer force could not stay on there. There couldn't be a

double intervention. Hammarskjold held that the UN presence was necessary and the question came up in the Security Council. For those who are interested there is one chapter in Ambassador Jarring's memoirs [Gunnar Jarring: Memoarer 1952-1964, pp. 141-155, Bonniers (JSBN 91-0-045958-5)] about this slight conflict between Sweden's Foreign Minister and the Secretary-General, Hammarskjold. That was the only time I can remember that there was any difficulty at all.

JK: I wanted to ask you a few other things. Dag Hammarskjold was killed in the Congo, a very tragic event, and the United Nations did an investigation. I understand that the Swedish government also investigated that event. Could you say a little bit about what took place with that investigation?

Lind: There was an international investigation made by the committee set up by the UN which found that out of the various possibilities behind the accident, mainly sabotage, attack, and human failure, none could be singled out nor excluded. The investigation was thus not quite conclusive and gave rise to much discussion and speculation in the press and other media including various theories about foreign aircraft having attacked the plane. All this speculation was, I think, one of the reasons why the Swedish government decided to set up a group of highly qualified legal and criminal experts to

go through and judge the international committee's work and findings. The secretary of that committee who really knows everything about the whole issue of the event in which Hammarskjold was killed was Axel Edelstam, a diplomat in the Swedish Foreign Service. His last post was Swedish Ambassador to Norway. He is now retired and lives in Sweden. He is a good source.

JK: Did the UN committee interview you at that time?

Lind: No, I wasn't involved.

JK: Did the Swedish committee contact you?

Lind: No, there was no reason to involve me. I had nothing to do with it. I was still doing UN work at the Foreign Office so, I saw the papers. They came through me, but I was not involved.

JK: In your opinion, what do you think happened?

Lind: It was, as far as I can understand, what I would call an accident without being able to name the cause. What can be discarded are all these fantastic stories that Hammarskjold himself caused it. That is nonsense. And unless somebody that claims that the plane was shot down or subject to sabotage, unless and until such a person gives some evidence I don't accept these causes. One can't believe in just a theory. They are very strong believers, those who make these claims, except they haven't any evidence.

JK: Informally we were discussing that there are documents

here in Sweden that people could get if they are interested in studying these things further.

Lind: Yes, and I would like to use this occasion to remind you that when Dag Hammarskjöld died, about two weeks before the crash, I received a letter here in Stockholm from him which rather astonished me. It was a brief letter saying that "in case of need I wish you to take care of my private papers, in my office and my home." That was the gist of it. Many people have taken this as some kind of proof that he knew that he was going to die, that he was expecting this, that he had a premonition.

JK: That his spiritual nature gave him this kind of premonition.

Lind: Yes, and some people went further saying that he arranged it. That is ridiculous. But it was a remarkable thing anyway.

JK: He had not discussed this with you earlier. This was the first time?

Lind: Right. It is very likely, and I have reason to believe, that this was something that his secretary advised him to do. He traveled so much and the whole situation was so tense in the Congo crisis. His secretary, who was a very intelligent woman working very closely with Dag, said, "when you go on you should have everything in order so why don't you decide what to do with your papers."

JK: And he trusted you.

Lind: Yes, he did. He asked me and in itself it wasn't so remarkable that I was chosen, but the timing was more so.

JK: You had taken care of his personal affairs.

Lind: Not really but during my three years at the UN I worked closely with him and there were no secrets. I saw everything. And after that I kept in touch with him when I came out to New York for UN meetings and there was the same kind of openness. In October I spent four weeks in New York carrying out the task of taking care of his private papers. I explained to the UN what I had to do which was easy because they were all my old friends and colleagues in the Secretariat. When I asked my Foreign Minister for leave to go he gave me the advice to ask the Secretary-General to appoint somebody from the Secretariat to assist me. I contacted Andrew Cordier, my old boss and friend, who assigned Brian Urquhart to help me on behalf of the UN. This greatly facilitated my task with regard to the papers in the SG's office. Then while gathering his papers in his home on 73rd Street, I found on his bed table a file with type written pages headed "Markings," which I had never seen, nor heard of before. Attached to the file was a small envelope addressed to a mutual friend in Sweden, Leif Belfrage, containing the letter quoted on the first page of all issues of Markings, in which Dag Hammarskjöld asked Belfrage to decide whether it should be published.

JK: So, now all his personal writings are here. Where are they?

Lind: Yes, all his personal writings, everything he had. Not from all his life but from 1953 and on. In fact, all his papers at the UN were taken to Sweden on the basis of an agreement made between myself and the UN. All these papers are in the Royal Swedish Library here in Stockholm.

JK: Are they open to the public?

Lind: They consist of two parts: the UN part and the personal part. When the papers had arrived in Sweden it was decided that they should be under a 25 year ban, but that requests for access could be considered on their merits. One permission for access has been given, namely to Brian Urquhart for the purpose of writing his book. Now 25 years after, or rather a little more, all the UN part of the papers are open and available for researchers. The other papers, the personal and private part of the Dag Hammarskjold collection in the Library remain under ban for another couple of years. But, there again if somebody doing serious research would want to see something request for access can be made and will be considered. In charge of the collection of papers beside the library is Ambassador (retired) Peder Hammarskjold who is a nephew of Dag's. He devotes much time to the Dag Hammarskjold papers in the Library.

JK: The personal papers were to remain closed then for thirty years?

Lind: The ban for them was also 25 years but has been prolonged.

JK: So, there is not an expiration date on that as such. That is very interesting. I really appreciate your explaining that to us.

Lind: What should be said in this context for your purpose of future research is that we decided then, and when I say we that was Dag Hammarskjöld's brother and myself, that it would be very important for the history of the United Nations to collect material from people closely associated with Dag Hammarskjöld and his work. So, we wrote letters, signed by Bo Hammarskjöld, to a number of persons who Dag Hammarskjöld had been dealing with, foreign ministers, etc. asking if they had any material, if they had letters, if they had personal memories of anything to please put it down and send it to the Royal Library where its confidential nature would be respected. Our fishing for such material has had the result that in the Library there are I don't know how many sealed envelopes with letters from ministers and other important people about things that were going on during Dag's time as SG. So, this material is there but nobody has seen or gone through it yet.

JK: If somebody were doing research they could request to see

that?

Lind: In due time.

JK: Would there be a list of who had written the letters available?

Lind: There is a list, of course, but we have had the ban which we have promised to respect. The time, of course, approaches when this material will have to be made available.

JK: It will be thirty years very soon.

Lind: Yes, that day will come. I am myself very curious to look at it all. There is also a collection of more private correspondence between Dag and his personal friends which have been deposited but still are under the ban. All his letters to me, just as an example, are there.

JK: His letters to you and your letters to him?

Lind: Well, if he had saved them. I don't know. I don't have copies of my letters to him. But, there may very well be letters from me there.

JK: So, at some time when someone wants to write a biography the material would be available.

Lind: Brian's book is about Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General. That is that period. Nothing has been written about him before 1953. Of course, there will be biographies and books that go back and get more into his personal life. It is then important to know that at the

Royal Library there is a lot of valuable source material which will eventually be made available. The one to contact about the Library papers is, as I mentioned before, Peder Hammarskjold in Stockholm.

JK: That is very important to know about. He was certainly a remarkable person.

Lind: He was unique.

JK: Thank you so much. Unless there is something more you'd like to add I think we are finished. Well, thank you very much.

Lind: Thank you.



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Dag Hammarskjöld

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