

Session 1: The Continuing Search for Truth: Decades waiting for the answer

Remarks by Stuart Mole

Thank you, Kingsley, for your kind introduction.

Susan Williams has described the unexplained death of Dag Hammarskjöld as like “a jigsaw with thousands of pieces.” Some of those pieces fit together easily, others do not; and it is clear that many more vital pieces are still missing.

For many years, it was the eye-witness accounts of local black Africans – later, Zambian citizens – which were excluded as coming from unreliable witnesses, on account of the colour of their skin.

But, at the outset, let us now hear one of those missing voices, courtesy of a BBC World Service interview some years ago. The speaker is the late Mama Chibesa Kankasa, someone who for many years was part of the struggle against colonial rule in Northern Rhodesia and who later became a Minister in Zambia’s first independence government, led by Dr Kenneth Kaunda. This is her testimony:

(Radio interview transcript)

The new evidence that has been unearthed in recent years has discredited old narratives of ‘pilot error’ in the crash of the *Albertina* and have painted a far more disturbing picture of what might have been the cause of the death of Hammarskjöld and so many others. That painstaking work, involving a number of those present here today (and joining the conference online) has reached as far as the United Nations and has given fresh impetus to the world body’s own inquiries in the search for truth. On that journey, as Kingsley has reminded us, the work of the Independent Dag Hammarskjöld Commission has been crucial in sifting through the evidence and pointing to new lines of inquiry. The Independent Commission has been supported by the Hammarskjöld Inquiry Trust, led by Lord Lea of Crondall, set up to provide financial and administrative backing for the Commission.

Among a distinguished group of trustees was Chief Emeka Anyaoku, whose private office I headed when he served as the Third Commonwealth Secretary-General, between 1990 and 2000. Chief Anyaoku’s abiding support for the quest for truth is instructive.

In 1961, Emeka Anyaoku was a fervent young African nationalist, his own country – Nigeria – newly independent. Two years later he took up his first diplomatic posting in the service of his country, as part of Nigeria’s permanent delegation at the United Nations. He was inspired by the activism and dedication that Hammarskjöld brought to the UN and to the causes of peace and justice which he espoused. For Anyaoku, our work today is not an academic discussion of a historical footnote. It is about the security and safety of those who are at the service of the international community. It is about the integrity of the offices they hold, including the highest, in pursuing our collective purposes. It is a vital, living principle which is at the heart of internationalism.

Let me now turn to my final task, to present the submission from Sir Stephen Sedley, the Chair of the Independent Hammarskjöld Commission, 2012-2013. It is headed "A Judicious Inquiry" and it begins:

(Sir Stephen Sedley's text)

And that concludes Sir Stephen Sedley's presentation.

Thank you.

Stuart Mole
29 February 2024