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### ***Swedish policy change: from passivity to activism***

This short summary overview benefits in parts from research by Hans Kristian Simensen. It also is a result of the ongoing collaborative efforts with several of those present and presenting today. Documents and statements referred to, are accessible on the website <http://www.hammar skjold inquiry.info/>, thanks to David Wardrop of the UNA Westminster Branch.

It is notable to observe the long road of Swedish (non-)engagement with the causes of the plane crash, which cost the lives of Dag Hammarskjöld, and the 15 persons in his company, on board the DC 6 plane named “the Albertina”. What started as an initial reluctance, if not refusal, to engage with serious investigations, became decades of indifference to re-opening investigations. Only due to a change in government in 2014, was this finally replaced by an ongoing commitment to remain seized with the matter.

#### *A short timeline of Swedish (non-)engagement*

1961/62

A Special Working Group was established by the Swedish Government, tasked “to review and evaluate the work of the other [Rhodesian and UN] investigations”. Presenting its report the same day as the UN investigation (2 May 1962), the Working Group declared that external interference was “the least likely cause” of the crash, and in that respect was less open-minded about the causes than the UN inquiry. In contrast to the UN report, which categorically found “no indications” of pilot error, the Swedish report suggested that “no direct evidence” existed. This deviated from its earlier interim statements, which had cast doubt on the theory that the crash was a mere accident. As Mathias Mossberg, the high-ranking and independent official appointed by the Swedish government at the request of Judge Othman, observed in his report, it is unclear why the Swedish report placed “itself in a sense closer to the two Rhodesian investigations than to the UN Commission”.

1992/93

After the media widely reported suspicions that the plane crashed because of sabotage, the Swedish government appointed Ambassador Bengt Rösiö, who had been in the Congo in 1961, to verify the accusations. He published his findings on 4 March 1993. He recommended in the main that the case should not be re-opened.

2012/13

Based on the 2011 publication of the book by Susan Williams (“Who Killed Hammarskjöld?”) a private initiative formed an Enabling Committee. It tasked four independent legal experts (the “Hammarskjöld Commission”) to explore the probative value of the new evidence presented by Williams. The Commission’s report was submitted to the UN Under Secretary-General Jan Eliasson in September 2013.

2014

In March, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed that the General Assembly might pursue matters further. This recommendation was in line with the initial UNGA resolution 1759 (XVII) of 26 October 1962, instructing the UNSG “to inform the General Assembly of any new evidence which may come to his [the UNSG’s] attention”.

However, there existed a dilemma: no UN Member State would show official support unless the Swedish Permanent Mission to the UN would take the lead. But the Swedish government of the time was not inclined to become active in support of re-opening the case. In this constellation, with the risk that the Secretary-General’s recommendation would have no outcome and could not be implemented, a general election in September led to a change in government. In the interim the agenda item at the General Assembly was re-scheduled after several postponements to December.

The election of a new Swedish Government was a game changer: On 15 December the Swedish Ambassador to the UN, Per Thöresson, introduced a draft resolution, calling for new investigations by an independent panel of experts. The proposal was co-sponsored by 20 Member States and adopted by consensus on 29 December.

#### 2015

A panel of three experts was established by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 16 March to verify the independent Commission’s findings. Headed by the former Chief Justice of Tanzania, Mohamed Chande Othman, its report confirmed the credibility of the independent Commission’s conclusions and recommendations.

#### 2016

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the General Assembly to appoint an eminent person to review all of the new information. Thanks to another resolution submitted by Sweden and co-sponsored by 74 Member States, adopted on 29 December, the Secretary-General was tasked to make such an appointment.

#### 2017

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Judge Othman on 8 February as the Eminent Person tasked with further investigations. Othman’s first report, submitted on 24 July, was circulated on 5 September. It concludes that it seems almost certain that further relevant information in the possession of Member States has not yet been disclosed. He recommends the further pursuance of matters by an eminent person and that relevant Member States should appoint high-ranking and independent officials to conduct searches of their security and intelligence archives.

Sweden submitted another draft resolution, supported by 70 Member States, on 28 November. The resolution was adopted on 24 December without a vote, and Judge Othman was re-appointed.

#### 2019

Judge Othman presented his second report on 31 July, partly drawing upon the work of high-ranking and independent appointees of some Member States, though without support from the United States, the United Kingdom, or South Africa. On 12 September the report was forwarded by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly President. The Secretary-General’s recommendations follow largely those of Judge Othman. Another Swedish draft resolution, supported by 128 Member States, was adopted on 27 December without a vote,

and extended the mandate of Judge Othman by two more years. This was extended by another year due to the Covid pandemic.

2022

In June, Judge Othman visited Sweden. Among others, he met relatives of those killed in Ndola and paid tribute to Dag Hammarskjöld at his grave site in Uppsala. On 26 July he presented his third report to the Secretary-General, who forwarded it on 25 August to the General Assembly. As Secretary-General Guterres stressed, it presented significant new information, strengthening the suspicions that external influence caused the crash of the plane when approaching the airport at Ndola. He expressed regrets that despite the appeals since 2017, no new documents were made accessible by key Member States, mentioning the limited or non-existent responses of South Africa, the USA, and the UK.

Sweden again submitted a draft resolution on 29 November, recommending another term for the Eminent Person. Supported by a record number of 141 Member States, the resolution was adopted without a vote on 30 December. Notably, neither the UK nor the USA have supported any of the draft resolutions so far.

#### *Domestic policy issues since then*

The continued engagement of Sweden, since the end of 2022 under a newly elected conservative government alliance, suggests an ongoing commitment, leaving behind the initial reluctance, which only ended with the change in government in late 2014. The growing evidence that the crash of the Albertina was no accident and no pilots' error, in combination with the massive increase of co-sponsoring Member States in support of further investigations, has certainly also influenced continued engagement.

In Sweden a new initiative was taken by Gudrun Brunegård, Member of Parliament for the Christian Democrats, a coalition partner in the current government. In mid-2020 Brunegård submitted, for the first time on this subject, an interpellation (or formal question in the Swedish Parliament), seeking to correct the implication in the initial Swedish findings of 1962, that pilot error was the likely cause of the crash. As she pointed out, this had created, in addition to the loss of their close relatives, traumatic feelings of guilt for the families of those killed, who also experienced social stigmatisation. In July 2020, Foreign Minister Ann Linde on behalf of the Government confirmed in her response, that there are indeed reasons to suspect foul play in the cause of the crash. Sweden therefore has taken the necessary initiatives for a continued investigation by the United Nations.

As well as generating this important correction, Brunegård constituted a four-member group, including three former members of the initial Enabling Committee of 2012/13: former Archbishop KG Hammar, the Norwegian researcher Hans Kristian Simensen, and me. The so-called Brunegård group seeks to find the reasons for a shift in the Swedish investigations of 1961/62. The group introduced its initiative in a public event at the Swedish Parliament in December 2021. Judge Othman recognised the initiative by a live transmitted audio-visual message to the audience. The initiative seeks to complement the international efforts, by urging the Swedish government to establish a local independent Truth Commission investigating the reasons and motives for the initial Swedish commission's leaning towards the Rhodesian findings (as reported above).

In May 2023 the Brunegård group, supported by the co-signatures of four other members of parliament from the Left, the Centre, the Green, and the Moderate parties, in a letter to Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, requested the establishment of such investigations. While Billström in his reply of July 2023, evaded a direct commitment, he conceded that it cannot be excluded that the final conclusions presented in 1962 may have been influenced by the political landscape of the time, guided by foreign affairs and national security considerations.

The demand remains, to provide full and unlimited access to whatever classified documents remain in the Swedish state's possession. This might not only throw more light on the circumstances of the drafting of the 1962 report, but it could even offer additional hitherto unknown information on what happened on this fateful night of September 17 to 18, 1961. In January 2024, the members of the group renewed their demands in a debate article, published by the respected Swedish newspaper "Svenska Dagbladet".

### *Concluding observations*

A much welcome revision of Swedish policy on the case took place with the change in government in 2014, paving at the last minute the way for new investigations by the United Nations. Despite another change in government, this policy has been maintained by Sweden, which has taken the necessary subsequent initiatives for a continued mandate for Judge Othman. At the same time, the initial tendency to accept pilots' error as the likely cause of the crash, has been revised. The long overdue rehabilitation could however be strengthened by at least a visible public gesture towards the family members of those then killed.

The Swedish Government also seems to be reluctant to offer full support for the initiative taken by the Brunegård group. The response so far indicates no interest in, or support for the investigations demanded. By treating the initiative as if it were a private matter, the Swedish Government denies further opportunities for investigations which would seek to establish if there are further documents not yet made accessible, which might offer additional evidence about what happened to Hammarskjöld's plane in September 1961. Being fully committed to establishing the truth, would require further steps from the Swedish Government.

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