

## THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE WORK OF THE DIPLOMAT DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD (1905-1961)

Iuliu-Marius MORARIU<sup>1</sup>

---

### ABSTRACT

*THE PERSONALITY AND WORK OF THE SWEDISH DIPLOMAT DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD (1905-1961) – THE SECOND UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, FORMER GOVERNOR OF THE RIKSBANK (THE BANK OF SWEDEN) AND ACTIVIST FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY AMONG THE UN MEMBRE STATES, WHO DIED TRAFICALLY IN A PLANE CRASH IN 1960, WHEN HE WAS TRAVELLING FOR SOLUTIONATE THE CONGO CRISE, ARE UNFORTUNATELY LITTLE KONWN IN THE FIELD OF BOTH ORTHODOX AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGY. NEITHER ARE HIS IDEAS PROPERLY VALORIZED, DESPITE THEIR IMPORTANCE, TOUCHING UPON POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC ANT THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS.*

*IN THIS CONTEXT, THIS PAPER AIMS HIGHLIGHTING THE INTERWINING THEOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN HIS WORK AND LIFE. THUS, WE SHALL RECREATE IN A HOLISTIC MANNER HIS BODY OF WORK AN ACTIVITY. TO THIS INTENT, WE SHALL ANALYTE BOTH HIS WORK, ESPECLIALLY HIS BOOK MARKINGS, BUT NOT ONLY, ANT THE FEW RESEARCH PAPERS WHICC TACKLE HIS WRITINGS AND ACTIVITIES. IN ADDITION, WE SHALL TRY TO OBSERVE THE UTILITY OF HIS IDEAS AT THE PRESENT MOMENT AND THE RESPONSE OF THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** UNITED NATION ORGANIZATION, MARKINGS, CONGO CRISE.

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) was the son of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, Prime Minister of Sweden (1914-1917) and chairman of the Nobel Foundation (1924-1927)<sup>2</sup>, the grandson of the Swedish poet Almqvist<sup>3</sup> and the second UN Secretary-General (1953-1961). He stands out by his contribution to solving important international tensions such as the Suez Crisis (1956)<sup>4</sup>, the Lebanon Crisis (1958), as well as the Congo Crisis (1959-1960). His

---

<sup>1</sup> MA candidate, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Faculty of History and Philosophy, „Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Personal e-mail: morariu\_iuliumarius@yahoo.com.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*\*, *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. V, XVth Edition (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, 1991), 664.

<sup>3</sup> Bernd Jordan, Alexander Lenz, *100 de personalități ale secolului- politicieni (100 personalities of the century – politicians)*, translated by Dragoș Dinulescu (Bucharest: All Educational Press, 2002), 80.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gheorghe Văduva, Mihai-Ștefan Dinu, *Crizele politico-militare ale începutului de mileniu (Politics and military crises of the beginning of millenium)*, (Bucharest: Press of National University of Defense, 2005) 26; Andre Siegfried, *Suez, Panama: et les routes maritimes mondiales, avec 33 cartes et graphiques*, Nouvelle

efforts gained him a Nobel Prize. The international cultural community knows him well and considers him a great man of culture and a tenacious diplomat<sup>5</sup>.

In Romania, however, despite references in translated encyclopaedias<sup>6</sup> and in studies of international relations on the aforementioned events<sup>7</sup>, Hammarskjöld remains almost unknown. Even more, the little information there is refers mostly to his work as a diplomat, belittling his role as theologian and publicist. Withal, he was a practicing Protestant and was eager to present theological information, to quote old and new theologies and to express his opinion on the role of faith and the Church.

Thus, his work *Markings*<sup>8</sup>, fundamental in terms of theology, is yet untranslated into Romanian and any research related to it is rather scarce, despite its importance and the interest it raised amongst the international theological community. Meanwhile, his political ideas, streaming from a Christian basis, remain almost unknown within the Romanian theological and cultural community.

This being the case, our research aims at highlighting the way in which the Swedish diplomat understood and applied the relation between religion and politics. He was raised and anchored in Christian values, which is why he had good knowledge of the Scriptures and of various writings of theologians from different epochs. This is made evident by the myriad quotations in the *Markings*<sup>9</sup> and by some of the speeches he gave to different TV channels as a representative of the UN and which can be consulted even today<sup>10</sup>. However, beyond his epistemological knowledge, he was a true practicing Protestant with an impeccable conduit. A secular researcher, who set off to illustrate Hammarskjöld's personality through his diplomatic qualities, makes reference to his moral profile as well. Thus, Hammarskjöld is portrayed as follows:

“In April 1953, Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) was elected UN Secretary-General, a position he held for eight years. His predecessor had told him that he was about to “get hold of the most impossible job on earth”. Yet, through his integrity, courage, diplomatic skills and enthusiasm in enforcing the Charter of the United Nations, Hammarskjöld brought new authority to this role. His innovative approach made the UN more powerful in avoiding imminent conflicts. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hammarskjöld was the

---

édition revue et augmentée (Paris: Armand Collin, 1948), and William Roger Louis, Owen Roger, *Suez 1956: the crisis and its consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), for more informations about this subject.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jordan, Lenz, *100 personalities*, 80-81; \*\*\*, *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 664-665; \*\*\*, *Enciclopedia de istorie universală (Encyclopedia of Universal History)*, translated by Alexandru Balaci, Mădălina Chelemen, Radu Gâdei, Sorina Venier (Bucharest: All Educational Press, 2003), 694; Thomas Parish, *Enciclopedia Războiului Rece (The Encyclopedia of Cold War)*, translated by Ion Nastasia, (Bucharest: Enciclopedia Univers Press, 2002), 130, for more biographic informations about the person. An important contribution in the promotion of his activity and his ideas brings the eponymous foundation. See: <http://www.dhf.uu.se/>, accessed in 12. 12. 2014, for more informations about the activity of this institution.

<sup>6</sup> See up.

<sup>7</sup> Like: Maurice Vaisse, eds. *Dicționar de relații internaționale, secolul XX (Dictionary of International Relations, XXth Century)*, translated by Marius Roman (Iași: Polirom Press, 2008), 152; Constantin Hlihor, Ecaterina Hlihor, *Comunicarea în conflictele internaționale – secolul XX și începutul secolului XXI (The Communication in international conflicts)*, (Bucharest: Comunicare Press, 2010), 147-174; Tony Busselen, *Une histoire populaire du Congo*, (Bruxelles: Editions Aden, 2010); Michel Dumoulin, Anne-Sophie Gijs, eds., *Du Congo belge à la République du Congo (1955-1965)*, (Bruxelles: Peter Lang Press, 2012), but also the books quoted in the other notes.

<sup>8</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972). The princeps edition appeared in 1963.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, 59, 63, 71 et passim.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEQr\\_dbH79Q&hd=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEQr_dbH79Q&hd=1), accessed in 12. 11. 2014.

Swede who became known for his knowledge of the international context.”<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned above, while working for the UN, Hammarskjöld mediated two of the greatest crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely the Suez and Lebanon Crises<sup>12</sup>. He also began mediation for the Congo Crisis and his role would have definitely been a decisive one, had it not been for his tragic ending in a plane crash, while on his way to Congo. During his entire activity, his endeavours aimed at freeing the UN from its dependency of great powers such as the USSR. This gained him the resentment of Khrushchev and made him resign from his position of Secretary-General with the UN<sup>13</sup>. His speech with respect to great powers such as the USSR, as well as his mediation, his dialogues and ordinary addresses<sup>14</sup> within the UN were marked by Christian terminology, passages from the Scriptures and other similar elements, his approach being therefore marked by his religious beliefs.

He militated for ecumenism and was thence a member of various committees, participating to ecumenical reunions<sup>15</sup>. For him, ecumenism was an instrument for bringing peace into the civil space, with the help of religion. He borrows some of the religious ideas related to peace and introduces them into his speech. The seven principles he puts forward for the functioning of the UN are a case in point. Here, religion is seen as a powerful weapon against terrorism (principle 7), since it cannot be a source of hatred or division, because it is the guarantor of morality (principle 6); it also has to be the foundation for common dialogue (principle 2) and the bridge for restoring human dignity in its entirety (principle 3) and for any kind of political demarche, given that morality lies on a religious basis (principle 5)<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, Hammarskjöld fathoms the relation between religion and politics and encourages the collaboration of the two, by using any necessary leverage at his disposal.

We thus understand that, for Dag Hammarskjöld, the second UN Secretary-General, there has to be good collaboration between religion and politics, the former being the guarantor of fair and coherent politics. He considers that religion represents the basis for morality and, from this point of view, it has to contribute to inter-human dialogue, peace and to restoring the primacy of equality and human dignity. This principle is valid and important even today. Its roots are to be found in the diplomat's education and convictions, which, as a practicing Christian, he never abjured even if, at times, his political life had to suffer.

---

<sup>11</sup> Gunel Torren, „Dag Hammarskjöld- the Pacemaker“, in. *Dag Hammarskjöld, Literature (On the 50th Anniversary of his Death)*, ed. Gunnel Toren (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Library 2011), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Vaisse, ed. *Dictionary of International Relations*, 152; Hlihor and Hlihor, *Communication in international conflicts* 150.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Vaisse, ed., *Dictionary of International Relations*, 152.

<sup>14</sup> For that, the Swedish diplomat was very known. Look what the analysts say about that subject: „His discourses were not especially charismatic, like his ancestor Trygve Lie, and he was often reading the discourses that he was written, in a monotone mode“. Kristian Stålne, „The Meaning-making of Dag Hammarskjöld“, in *Integral Review*, vol. 7, Nr. 2/2011, 138.

<sup>15</sup> \*\*\*, *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 664-665.

<sup>16</sup> Inge Lønning, „Politics, Morality and Religion – The Legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld“, in *The Ethics of Dag Hammarskjöld*, ed. Hans Corell, Inge Lønning, Henning Melber (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2010), 35-36.

## REFERENCES

1. **Busselen, Tony**, *Une histoire populaire du Congo*. Bruxelles: Editions Aden, 2010.
2. **Dumoulin, Michel, Gijs, Anne-Sophie**, eds., *Du Congo belge à la République du Congo (1955-1965)*. Bruxelles: Peter Lang Press, 2012.
3. \*\*\*, *Enciclopedia de istorie universală (Enciclopedia of Universal History)*. translated by Alexandru Balaci, Mădălina Chelemen, Radu Gâdei, Sorina Venier. Bucharest: All Educational Press, 2003.
4. **Hammarskjöld, Dag**, *Markings*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.
5. **Hlihor, Constantin, Hlihor, Ecaterina**, *Comunicarea în conflictele internaționale – secolul XX și începutul secolului XXI (The Communication in international conflicts)*. Bucharest: Comunicare Press, 2010.
6. **Jordan, Bernd, Lenz, Alexander**, *100 de personalități ale secolului- politicieni (100 personalities of the century – politicians)*. translated by Dragoș Dinulescu. Bucharest: All Educational Press, 2002.
7. **Lønning, Inge**, „Politics, Morality and Religion – The Legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld”. in *The Ethics of Dag Hammarskjöld*, ed. Hans Corell, Inge Lønning, Henning Melber. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2010.
8. **Luis, William Roger, Roger, Owen**, *Suez 1956: the crisis and its consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
9. **Parish, Thomas**, *Enciclopedia Războiului Rece (The Enciclopedia of Cold War)*. translated by Ion Nastasia. Bucharest: Enciclopaedyc Univers Press, 2002.
10. **Siegfried, Andre**, *Suez, Panama: et les routes maritimes mondiales, avec 33 cartes et graphiques*. Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée. Paris: Armand Collin, 1948.
11. **Stâlne, Kristian**, „The Meaning-making of Dag Hammarskjöld”, in *Integral Review*, vol. 7, Nr. 2/2011.
12. \*\*\*, *The new Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. V, XVth Edition. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, 1991.
13. **Torren, Gunel**, „Dag Hammarskjöld- the Pacemaker“. in *Dag Hammarskjöld, Literature (On the 50th Anniversary of his Death)*. ed. Gunnel Toren. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Library 2011.
14. **Văduva, Gheorghe, Dinu, Mihai-Ștefan**, *Crizele politico-militare ale începutului de mileniu (Politics and military crises of the beginning of millenium)*. Bucharest: Press of National University of Defense, 2005.
15. <http://www.dhf.uu.se/>, accessed in 12. 12. 2014.
16. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEQr\\_dbH79Q&hd=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEQr_dbH79Q&hd=1), accessed in 12. 11. 2014.