

Did Dag Die in a Kidnap?

By ARTHUR L. GAVSHON

LONDON (AP) — Two men close to Dag Hammarskjold suggest that a bungled kidnap bid by white mercenaries may have caused the death of the former United Nations secretary-general.

Hammarskjold and 15 companions died Sept. 17, 1961, when their plane crashed in the African bush. The Swedish statesman was heading for a peace parley with Moise Tshombe, then trying to lead the province of Katanga out of the Congolese union.

The theory of a bungled kidnap attempt was mentioned by Hammarskjold's nephew, Khut, who now heads the Hammarskjold family, and by George Ivan Smith, director of the British U.N. office. Both were speaking in recorded interviews with the British Broadcasting Corp. program "24 hours" in a feature marking the 10th anniversary of the crash.

'What Kind of Accident?'

Knut Hammarskjold left interviewer James Hogg in no doubt that he is well aware of the theory of a bungled kidnap bid by white mercenaries. The crash itself, he said, was an accident, "but what kind of accident" remains open.

He was asked if he ruled out foul play.

"I don't rule out anything,"

he replied. "Much speculation could have been avoided if, at the time of the inquiries, the whereabouts of certain very active people could have been defined in a very precise way."

Knut Hammarskjold was asked what sort of people he meant.

"Adventurers for money," he replied. "Some of them might not be completely strange to that sort of operation," meaning kidnaping.

Kidnapers' Aim

The younger Hammarskjold, who is secretary general of the International Air Transport Assn., and Smith both suggested the aim of the would-be kidnapers may have been to prevent the United Nations and Tshombe from coming to terms.

Smith put it thus: "It was felt by the mercenaries that we were moving toward a reconciliation with Tshombe and that meant they were going to lose their bread and butter . . . If the United Nations and Tshombe got together and brought about unification of the Congo there was no reason for their presence any longer."

As Smith described the theory, the would-be kidnapers may have learned the radio frequency used by Hammarskjold's plane.

Then, equipped with the proper transmitting gear, they could have made contact with the pilot and, in the name of the regular aviation control authorities, talked or lured it down and away from its true destination.

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