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STURE LINNER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS: THE CONGO OPERATION

JK: To begin, Mr. Linner, for the record would you please explain what your role was in the Congo and when you began your functions there?

Linner: I was asked by the Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, to go down to the Congo together with Ralph Bunche to represent the Secretary-General at the festivities in connection with the independence of the Congo in June, 1960.

JK: You were present at the independence ceremonies.

Linner: I was. With a glint in his eye the Secretary-General then said that this would take a week or two or maybe a year or possibly two. "So, do your packing accordingly," which I did. And it turned out that the latter time frame was the one that took place. Then when it was decided that I should stay on when the crisis broke out. I became Chief of Civilian Operations. The top hierarchy then was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who was at that time partly Ralph Bunche when he was there directly representing the SG and then Dayal, the Indian Ambassador. On the military side there was the Swedish General, Carl von Horn. On the civilian operations side I was the one. Civilian Operations implied a) the repairing of the damage caused by the Belgians' hasty departure of the Congo -- for instance, airport facilities were destroyed, the harbors were not

functioning, etc.-- and b) to try and rebuild as much as possible in the shortest possible time, to make life function again. The idea then was that the civilian operations would have a kind of cabinet, if you like, composed of the representatives of the various UN agencies: FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization; WHO, the World Health Organization, and what have you. There was one innovation. Hammarskjold tested the idea of the Chief of Civilian Operations having executive power. In other words, he was entitled to give orders and instructions to the others. Whereas normally, and still today, even the Secretary-General can't give orders to the directors-general or the various agencies. He has to consult them and suggest and guide them, etc. If I may dwell on this point because I think it is very important for later developments, it was a very bold innovation. The one who made difficulties primarily against this arrangement was the Indian. He was a fiery, very independent minded person, naturally under the circumstances. It was a bit ironic that Dag Hammarskjold, always having the third world interests closest to his heart, would be hampered in his efforts to create a new working style by a representative of such an important third world country. It lasted as long as I was there and then things went back to normal.

JK: Then at that time you were able to coordinate what was

going on.

Linner: Yes. I think what was also important is that there was a spirit of enthusiasm very much kindled by Dag Hammarskjold's personal example. And you saw highly competent people coming down. For instance, the then head of UNICEF, a very distinguished American, came down. At that time we had improvised our offices at a hotel. I told him how desperately sorry I was not to be able to give him the accomodations that was his due. He said, "not to worry, Sture, I'll fix that myself." And he went down and bought up the flower shop on the ground floor and arranged his office there just as an example of the kind of spirit that prevailed. He was a very tall, silvered haired, distinguished man, the aristocrat type, you know.

JK: You mentioned earlier that you had been at the independence ceremonies. During the ceremonies were there any indications of some of the problems to come?

Linner: Well, you felt it in the air the minute you came down that something was brewing to begin with. The Belgians that you met -- it was quite natural to contact various Belgians in key positions -- were terribly nervous and upset feeling that things were going to happen. Let me go back in time a bit. Talking about foreseeing things happen, this is, I think, of certain importance. A year earlier I was working in Monrovia, Liberia, as Executive

Vice President and General Manager of LAMCO, the Liberian American Swedish Mineral Association, which was a joint venture between the leading mining company in Sweden of which Bo Hammarskjold was chairman, Dag's brother. I was there in Monrovia when Dag Hammarskjold came on his first trip as Secretary-General, his first trip ever, by the way, to Africa. And he stayed with us as much as it could be arranged aside from the official protocol. We weren't close friends then. We knew each other enough from Upsula days, from academic years to stop in the street and chit chat for awhile before we went on.

He was very anxious to know about my experience from the round trip I had just finished in Africa where I had toured a number of countries which he was supposed to go to. I could feed into his theoretical knowledge some practical experience of the most recent events. After we had talked for days and days on this he said, "I would like very much for you to be prepared to go to the Congo in about a years time because I foresee great trouble there. This was before anyone had talked about independence, apart from various communist leaders and in the negotiations in Brussels. But, the international opinion wasn't tuned in to that sort of thing at all. And I was quite impressed by his being so sure about this. He said, "I feel it and I have indications and that is partly why I am in Africa. I would like you then

to be prepared to go down there on my behalf in one function or the other." I said, "I am sorry but I am very busy in my present job and I don't know the first thing about the UN. Frankly I'm not very fond of that kind of vast, huge bureaucracy." And he said, "that's why I would like you to come because you don't know the rules and regulations and I would not like you to become acquainted with them because I need someone I trust who speaks the same language, in more than the literal sense, and who understands towards where I would be driving and who would not feel hampered by the usual civil servant caution, looking things up in the textbook all the time, but, would go ahead and create rules breaking the old ones in the process if necessary." Doing what needs to be done. So, I found that very attractive, I must say. It was always delightful to meet with him. So, I said, "all right, the answer is still no, but we'll see when the time comes if you are right." It was against this background that I was more or less Shanghaied into this job. I had difficulties later on, on that score. I don't mind mentioning it to you. For instance, let me mention that at one time there was trouble in one of the provinces, Kasai, and quite extraordinary measures had to be taken in order to save people from starving to death. At that time the UN was very bad off as far as transport facilities. We had to

have trucks. So, what we did was to steal trucks from the Congolese army who used them for mischeif anyway and paint them with the UN emblem. This, of course, was highly unorthodox. And you can imagine when the UN auditors started getting close to this sort of operation they became, should I say, a bit confused. For years after I had finished there I remember someone was writing to me about it and asking for receipts and checks and so forth. So, I said to him quite simply, "we stole them. We saved people and that was what the whole thing was about." We had to get the food to the people. If we had gone along with protocol they would have died, quite simply.

Also, we couldn't do anything about UN troops being attacked by wild gangs, wild because they were desperately hungry. There were tribal conflicts, also, complicating the issue. There was slaughter and murder within the camps. I was looking around desperately for someone who had the capacity to help us in this situation. The UN troops were very thin on the ground. I wasn't too keen on having uniformed people anyway even if they were unarmed. The uniform itself might insight trouble even with the best of intentions from the soldiers. So, I asked the American Quakers and the British Quakers. I have always had a tremendous respect for the Quakers. And they did a fantastic job. These

things are interesting for history. I am anxious to give this as a very positive example of unorthodoxy again.

JK: So, the Quakers were able to help out through the UN?

Linner: I suggested to the Secretary-General that he should ask the Quakers. Nobody had really thought of it before. They came at the request of the Secretary-General.

JK: Initially the Belgians had signed an agreement with the Congolese, a friendship agreement which basically said that they would stay on and continue to help to run the country. But as events occurred the Belgians started leaving. Did that present problems for you in the work that you had to carry out?

Linner: Yes, indeed, but not so much for me but for the poor Congolese. The Belgians panicked. I must say, seeing many of the Belgian men dress up as women in order to get priority on the transport was shameful, embarrassingly shameful, so undignified. They left at Matadi down at the harbor and they left in such a hurry that patients were still strung up on the operating tables when our people came down to save them. Everbody left who could possibly leave and there, again, a very unorthodox assistance was given to us by Swedish missionaries who volunteered. All was done in such a hurry because of this panicked flight. Everything had to be done so quickly. There were some missionaries who were splendid chaps. They happened to be Swedes. I don't mention it

because of their nationality. But, I am very proud to say that they were Scandinavians. They went down and braved the dangers and saved those chaps that were in the hospitals.

The crucial thing was that they destroyed the blueprints of the installations, all the instruction manuals, and all the drawings showing the mechanisms of the buildings.

JK: Why would they destroy the blueprints?

Linner: Out of spite. Remember how some of the French behaved when they left Algeria? They burned the Koran. Why? There has always been a sort of hate/love relationship, possibly even still today, between the Congolese and the Belgians. The Congolese had respect for the qualifications among some of the Belgians, but on the other hand, nobody loves a foreign ruler. And the Belgians were not always the most tactful rulers.

JK: It seemed as though they had not prepared the Congolese. There were very few educated Congolese.

Linner: There were very few, indeed. If my memory doesn't fail me, I think there were 17 with academic degrees. They were taught Flemish as a compulsory language up to the time of independence, if you can imagine. And they knew that the independence day was coming. That was a sure way of provoking bitterness and resentment.

JK: There was particular bitterness in the military.

Linner: You call it a military but that is a euphemistic term. Some of them were well trained, but many of those who dared to call themselves an army were just given uniforms and a gun.

JK: Was part of your responsibility to implement some training of the military?

Linner: Training of the military, no, but something related to it. Later on we carried out riot training for the police, mastering and controlling riot situations, how you handle a mob that has run amok. That sort of thing we did have instruction, but not military training per se.

JK: Eary on you had some conversations with Lumumba about what the Congo was going to need from the UN. What kinds of requests did Lumumba make early on at that time?

Linner: The first visit to Lumumba I made together with Ralph Bunche. And this again gives a bit of the atmosphere. Lumumba received us very kindly and talked for a very long time, at least an hour. And after the meeting was over, I remember Ralph Bunche asked me, "what is your impression? How do you sum him up?" And I said, "there was something in his eyes that worried me. I wonder whether he is on drugs or not. But apart from that, his brain and his way of talking, I think you have there the potential for a great leader." Ralph said, "I agree with you completely. There is something I cannot put my

finger on it, maybe drugs, maybe something else."

JK: But he struck you as an intelligent man?

Linner: Very intelligent and not at all wild and rambling, ranting and raving and accusing and that sort of thing, very calm and very well balanced. What we were discussing at that first meeting and the subject of subsequent meetings were mainly the basic priorities. Ralph talked about the politcal side and I talked about my civilian operations side. Ralph Bunche was anxious to find out to what extent he was prepared to collaborate with various other factions, establish priorities and that sort of thing, and I was interested in his views on how to tackle the rebuilding of the Congo at the time. Everything had to be rebuilt at the same time. So, you had to establish your priorities. He was quite knowledgeably versed on both scores. He had an almostly touchingly exaggerated faith in the United Nations. He thought we would solve all the problems for him, that we had everything at our command. He asked for this, that, and the other and we would be able to give it to him. I think that he did not at all realize -- and this is nothing to do with intelligence but more to do with knowledge -- the limitations and restrictions and the kind of compromises that the UN is bound to run into. I have an example from Cambodia. The present Prime Minister, Hun Sen, whom I've known since 1979 -- I was

down there recently -- is brilliant intellectually but his depth of ignorance in 1979 when he was foreign minister was unbelievable, no knowledge. He didn't know the first thing about the difference between the United States and the United Nations, and so on. It was the same with Lumumba.

I'm anxious to put this into the picture right now because I think it has so much to do with the later developments. They had been really kept down so, you really had to start with point A to explain something. The first minister of health in Mobutu's government was appointed minister of health because he was the only one who had seen a hospital from the inside and that was as a patient. So, he was selected because at least he had been allowed inside. That sort of thing which is hard for us to realize. It was a huge undertaking, education, showing understanding and patience.

JK: Was education a priority for Lumumba?

Linner: Yes, it was. As you know, in the third world education is the key word. It comprises control of the demographic situation, health, and so forth.

JK: As things developed the army mutinied and there was tremendous chaos. I understand that Ralph Bunche and his staff had been ordered out of the rooms that had been set up in the hotel at gunpoint by the mutinous soldiers. Were you a part of this staff?

Linner: Yes, I was. They were chanting outside of the hotel, I remember, "Bunche for lunch, and Linner for dinner!" They cooked up that slogan. It was funny. I don't know how they got a hold of it. It was funny in the beginning and I remember laughing. But, then it became serious and we had a marvelous secretary named Pauline, or something like that, who was rather, how should I say, she had an eloquence to her body. She was well endowed, if you know the expression. When the Congolese soldiers saw her we were really afraid of what was going to happen. So, on one occasion we locked her into the bathroom. When they stormed in there threatening us, we were desperately praying that nobody would need to go to the bathroom. There was poor Pauline hiding.

It was very tough. We had to go to the post office where we had set up our ONUC communications. That was not far away from the hotel where we stayed, but we had to have an escort all the time.

JK: So, correspondence between UN headquarters in New York had to go through the post office?

Linner: What we did was to use a kind of system at the American Embassy where we used the communication facilities. But from time to time, nevertheless, we wanted on purpose to use the post office not to give the impression that we were relying on other forms of communication.

JK: After the crisis and the chaos really started to take

hold the Congolese government asked the United Nations for assistance of a military nature. Were you a part of those discussions at that time?

Linner: As I said we were three people and we kept as strictly as we could to our respective domains but obviously we were discussing it. I had no responsibility on the military side and never tried to interfere but when asked for an opinion I gave it to them. Dayal particularly had the habit of morning prayer where in a rather rambling way he talked about the problems as he saw them. Then Carl van Horn and I were invited to give our views and, of course, there we talked quite freely. But I am anxious to stress that I neither had the ambition nor the capacity nor the right to decide on things outside my own civilian operations. Later on, when I became officer in charge, of course, then things changed. Then I had the whole gamut.

JK: As I understand it was rather delicate to figure out the proper wording in the request because they had to get the approval of the Security Council so, they had come up with the wording "assistance of a military nature".

Linner: General von Horn played an important part in this along with Andrew Cordier. He was very much involved. He was in New York but he came down now and then.

JK: When it was decided to send UN forces your responsibilities and titled changed?

Linner: Yes, but I wouldn't link it with that particularly. I would link it with the fact that Ambassador Dayal became personna non grata with the then Congolese government. He was asked to leave.

JK: What was the cause?

Linner: I think a combination of factors, as often happens. It is not easy to give a clear cut answer, but a) Dayal stuck strictly to his instructions and to the UN mandate; he was a very loyal servant to the UN and to the Secretary-General and he did not give in one inch when it came to questions of principle. That is the positive way of putting it and it is quite a true way. There is another way of saying more or less the same thing that he was an Indian intellectual of the type which could hardly hide his disdain for those blacks. He didn't speak the same language in any possible manner. To begin with he didn't speak French which is important in a French speaking country. Second, and much more important, he didn't like them and he despised them. I am expressing myself very cruelly and to the point but let's have it out, the truth. I think he could have stood on his principles and defended the UN views as efficiently and more efficiently if he had been able to tune in more with the Congolese minds and the Congolese way of looking at things. I remember one evening, for instance, Mobutu came along and he was after all then in charge of the

military forces. And he was left standing while Dayal was seated. Having been a subordinate in the Belgian army you can imagine that Mobutu did not like this humiliation in front of others. So, I had to take Mobutu out on the pretext that I had to explain to him that this was not badly meant but it was just an oversight. But little things like that added up to building an animosity from the Congolese side which then got out of hand and became irrational and unreasonable. And as this was building up on the Congolese side it reinforced Dayal's attitude of haughtiness and arrogance and there you are, simple psychological mechanisms started.

JK: Then Dayal went back to New York.

Linner: Yes, and was very bitter about it, very bitter. I don't think he ever understood his own shortcomings. He belonged to another world. You have a parallel in a way with Conor Cruise O'Brien in Katanga, If I may jump ahead a bit, a brilliant mind, brilliant writer, brilliant thinker, brilliant everything but not the man to discuss issues with heavy Belgian mining bosses who controlled life in Katanga, through the Union Miniere Association. He felt contempt for them and he showed it. And the Belgians didn't understand the first thing about what this man was talking about with his intellectual elegance and brilliance. That only goes to prove that men who might have been absolutely first class in their own

environment, in another environment were maybe not all that good, under those circumstances here. And people that you never expected to really do something outstanding all of a sudden showed their effort in a surprisingly pleasant way.

JK: We were talking about your change in responsibilities.

Linner: That meant taking over the whole show and it was a tough job.

JK: At that point then you coordinated everything that was going on.

Linner: I tried to. I was supposed to, mind you, in a country where communications didn't work, where planes weren't available, and where everything had broken down. That is something in 1990 that nobody with all their intellectual brilliancy could possibly understand the working circumstances. I say this because with electronics being what they are you get in touch instantly with Manila, with the Gulf, and with everything in a second. When we had to communicate with Elizabethville from Leopoldville and we had to send a coded message of average length say half a page or something not one of those long things, it took as a rule six hours to get it there and get it decoded. On the other side, suppose that they handled it immediately, and had their replies ready, depending on what the questions were, it would take another six hours. In those twelve hours the whole situation could have

changed completely.

JK: How were the messages sent?

Linner: Well, we had to rely on many things, send people personally, also with New York.

JK: You didn't have a radio?

Linner: No, as I said we had to use the good offices of the US Embassy, but we couldn't abuse that either. We had to be careful. We were neutral and couldn't rely on one embassy. It was a matter of principle. It was not right. It was not right toward the Ambassador to have abuse of this kind. Every now and then I had to talk with Hammarskjold over the open line. First, to get that line and second, knowing that all the international press corps was listening in, there was no secrecy.

JK: Did you have a telephone in your offices?

Linner: Yes.

JK: You didn't have to go to the post office for phone calls.

Linner: No, but let me tell you a story about that. One day a Congolese came saying, "I want to repair your telephone." I said, "it is working a bit hap hazardly. Do what you can. As a rule though I can at least talk locally without interruptions." And he worked and worked and worked and then said, "I can't manage it." I said, "what are you doing?" He said, "I am supposed to put in one of these listening devices but I can't get it screwed in in the right way."

JK: So he just told you what he was doing. Did he think you would help him? . . . Well, the whole situation there must have been very complicated.

The troops arrived fairly soon after the request.

Linner: Yes.

JK: What were their functions when they first arrived? What were they intended to do?

Linner: Their major function was to quell riots when they occurred and to keep order and peace and to keep things working and avoid loss of life.

JK: How was that dealt with by the Congolese army?

Linner: We were in constant touch with the Congolese military command, with Mobutu particularly. We didn't do a thing, in principle, which they were not informed about and which we had not had the chance of discussing with them. I say in principle because sometimes we had to act so quickly that they were informed afterwards but, that was the exception. If there was a riot somewhere you couldn't always sit and wait for the opportunity to discuss it. You had to send the boys there and then connect with the Congolese counterpart. But it worked very well.

JK: Was there resentment by the Congolese military about the entrance of the UN forces?

Linner: No, not really.

JK: What was the law and order situation in Leopoldville?

Linner: Anything could happen at anytime and particularly after dark. And it could happen very suddenly like a tropical storm it could blow up just like that. A little incident with two Congolese say getting drunk and fighting each other and others joining them and then all of sudden there would be a big fight and you were called in. As an example of that in the Kasai province the paper which is today called Guardian in Britain but then was called Manchester Guardian had a first class correspondent there and he wrote a marvelous article in the Manchester Guardian which was headlined "The Muddle." This was based on a story I had told him about a transport convoy of trucks carrying beer from x to y somewhere out in the Congo, I think Kasai. And the Congolese patrol saw those trucks and being rather thirsty suggested in no uncertain terms that they should share the beer with the drivers of the trucks. They said they couldn't do that because of their instructions. Whereupon the guns were taken out and the fighting started and the beer was drunk and everybody was getting a bit out of control. Now, when those rumors, and here we come to the lack of communication facilities again, the rumors spread and got magnified. When those rumors came to Leopoldville we were given the impression that a big fight with troops had been fought according to all tactical and strategic rules and that sort of thing. The background was quite

simply a muddle with some thirsty soldiers snatching beer. That was one great problem and I think that has been confirmed over the years both in UN service and other kinds of service the first thing that breaks down, except in certain situations, is the communication system and that leads to all kinds of confusion and mistakes and errors.

JK: You had the opportunity of meeting with many of the people there including Mobutu and others. What was the nature of the relationship between Kasavubu, the President, and Lumumba, the Prime Minister?

Linner: From an outsider, hard to judge. In the beginning the relationship tended to work out quite well. Kasavubu was a sort of father figure, taciturn, rather closed up, not making much noise but still having certain authority. His tribe was important. Lumumba was the much younger firebrand orator. But, of course, relations soured later on. It came as a complete surprise to all of us when Kasavubu took over. Ralph Bunche was at that time in Leopoldville and I remember he was reading the New York Times and I was listening to the radio in the other corner of the room and got Kasavubu on the radio declaring that he had made a coup d'etat. So, I rushed over to Ralph and said, "hey, something has happened here." And he was a bit annoyed and said, "listen, I,m reading the baseball reports and you know this is sacred

to me. Can't you wait?" I said, "I can wait, but before I wait, Lumumba has been deposed by Kasavubu." Then Bunche did interrrupt his reading of the baseball scores and that is the way the news came. That's not quite the whole story. Kasavubu had called me sometime before and asked me for a map of the Congo. I said, "What kind of map, how large?" He said, "it should be as large as possible because you see this wall behind me here in my office is empty and I feel rather lost. I don't quite know where the Congo is in Africa. I don't know how the Congo looks on the map." So, I brought him the map that I had in my office right away. Then he said, "let's draw up the lines for new administrative units. I'd like to have more provinces and add to the number of existing provinces." I said, "wait a minute. That's not really my task to reconstruct the administrative set up of the Congo." Then he asked, "How do you make a coup d'etat? Can you give me your experience about that?" I thought he was half joking because he had a sense of humor that came through every now and then. I said, "that's easy, you avoid violence; you take over the radio station; you take away the man you want to replace, feed him well; you don't go to any excesses of any kind, no physical harm of any kind. Why do you ask?" "Oh," he said, "just as a matter of interest." Then when he made this speach he said, "I want to point out that no violence had taken

place and the Prime Minister is being well treated."

JK: Oh no, well, at least he didn't say he had done it on your advice.

Linner: Ralph said to me, "you look funny." So, I told him the story and he said, "can you beat that."

JK: With your first meetings with Lumumba you said that he seemed like a very intelligent person, following that Lumumba had made threats and had become rather violent in his language and so forth.

Linner: Because he didn't get out of the UN what he had wanted.

JK: What were the nature of Lumumba's threats at that time?

Linner: He said that if the UN can't help us you'll have to leave us and I will address myself to the Pope and to Moscow and the first place he mentioned was Washington. He wanted American help in the first place. He was not at all, at first, anti-American or anti-West. I will take my help from wherever I can get it. Ralph's attitude was calm and he tried to explain to him again the mechanisms of the UN and how the various powers came into the picture. What we could do and couldn't do.

JK: Following Lumumba's dismissal he turned around and dismissed Kasavubu. Who was actually running the country after that?

Linner: Nobody. You had Mobutu and others but there was no real leadership. They had no experience.

JK: Shortly after that Mobutu did take over the government.

Linner: Yes.

JK: How did that transpire? I understand that when that announcement came over the radio that he was actually at UN headquarters.

Linner: He asked our views about how to go about it and we tried to explain again that we would give him our views but the responsibility was his. We were not going to try to rule the country for him. We had no right to. If he could get as many technicians as he could, young people who could deal with concrete issues and not spend most of their time on authority exercises and tribal conflicts, it would be better for the people to get things running. Whereupon, as you know, he appointed those commissions of students most of whom were young chaps. Some were brilliant and others were less brilliant, of course. All of them had little administrative experience. It was bound to happen especially when you don't have experienced people.

JK: Did Mobutu have American Support at that time?

Linner: As I remember, yes.

JK: The other issue that arose soon after was the secession of the Katanga Province from the Republic of the Congo led by Tshombe. How did that begin to complicate the UN operation?

Linner: It is a very intricate story because there was traditionally a strong tension to begin with between the

Belgians in the Katanga Province and the Belgians in Leopoldville. The only thing that united them was that they shared a contempt for and an antagonism against the Belgians in Brussels. If you see what I mean in Katanga, in Elizabethville, as it was then called, you had the Union Miniere as the all dominating factor. All the business people were linked up with British mining interests and they had nothing to spare for the bureaucrats and the civil servants in Leopoldville whom they regarded as a rather unecessary imposition from a financial and administrative point of view. And those up in Brussels didn't understand the Katanga or anything on the Congo. They were just trying to direct things from a distance. The usual thing in the world in every country if you have a business concern with headquarters say in London and affiliate companies out in the field there will always be a built in feeling from both sides that they don't realize the importance of headquarters or the field depending on which side you're on. So there is nothing peculiar about it. This complicated things very much, of course. The UN had to address itself to the institution. We could not engage ourselves in decisions on one side or the other.

JK: After the UN troops had arrived in the Congo what was the UN policy at that point? Originally had the UN intended to become involved in the internal politics of the Congo?

Linner: It was our overall policy not to get involved.

JK: But eventually that changed. So many things happened so quickly and now we have only covered the first month. Towards the end of July after independence Hammarskjold did come to Leopoldville. Did you meet with him then and were you involved in the discussions that took place?

Linner: Yes.

JK: What were some of the concerns that you were discussing at that point.

Linner: To keep the whole thing together, to put it in a nutshell. There were centrifugal forces everywhere, tribal societies fighting, and so forth. We tried to avoid bloodshed at all costs and get the civilian society working peacefully. That was our main concern.

JK: Was Hammarskjold discussing sending troops into Katanga at that point?

Linner: I don't remember exactly and rather than to second guess the dates etc. I would prefer to say that I don't remember.

JK: That's OK. I was just wondering what some of the discussions were. A few weeks later he decided to send Ralph Bunche to Elizabethville to appraise the situation there and to make a recommendation as to whether UN troops could be sent. I understand that Ralph Bunche returned saying that it was not a good time. What was

the situation in Elizabethville that made it not a good time to send troops?

Linner: The main trouble factor was Tshombe himself who was a man who was completely unreliable. He could give his word one day and break it happily without any compunction the next day. He allied himself with this that or the other. All of us on the UN side in the Congo at that time including Ralph felt that we had no real counterpart to rely on in the Katanga. It was a tricky, dangerous situation. Anything could happen.

JK: Tshombe had a Minister of the Interior, Munongo, who seemed to have been a difficult person.

Linner: Very much so.

JK: What part of the tension was due to Munongo?

Linner: Certainly some, but Tshombe had the overall responsibility and Munongo couldn't do anything unless Tshombe had authorized it.

JK: With the situation as it was there was pressure on Hammarskjold to get UN troops into Katanga. He returned to the Congo later and took troops into Katanga with him. What was Lumumba's reaction to this?

Linner: Lumumba and Leopoldville were supporting every move they could think of to keep the Katanga within the Congolese framework. Hammarskjold would never and could never have done anything of that kind without the authorization of the Congolese leadership.

JK: We had talked earlier about the breakdown of the government itself. Kasavubu continued to have support and remained the President. Lumumba was out of the governmnet but remained under UN protection for a time. He decided on his own to leave that protection and was later kidnapped. In your opinion could the UN have done more to protect him or intervene on his behalf?

Linner: Knowing what happened afterward it is easy to say that we should have done more but at that time I think every reasonable safety measure was taken by the UN. Of course, the surprising factor was that Lumumba wanted to escape. We were firmly convinced that he would realize that it was terribly dangerous for him to go outside of our protection and that was the complicating factor in the whole issue.

JK: Who was it that was threatening him? Why was it that he needed the UN protection?

Linner: Tribal conflicts, the Katangese saw him as the enemy number one.

JK: Was he considered an enemy of Kasavubu?

Linner: Yes.

JK: Later Lumumba met his death tragically.

Linner: To the great great chagrin of Dag Hammarskjold, I must say. He was terribly upset about this.

JK: It has never been completely clear how he died.

Linner: Not to my knowledge.

JK: Do you have any thoughts about how it happened or what went on?

Linner: I can only guess and my guesses are not worth more than anyone elses. The Belgians hated his guts and the Belgian interests allied themselves with various other Congolese anti-Lumumba interests.

JK: What about US interests? Do you think there was any CIA involvement?

Linner: I really don't know. Who knows? That was not at all seriously considered at the time.

JK: Lumumba was taken to Elizabethville.

Linner: Yes.

JK: Someone later on reported that Munongo had boasted of having killed Lumumba. Had you heard that?

Linner: I heard rumors, but I don't know.

JK: In February of 1961 the UN forces had reached a point of frustration as to what they could actually accomplish in Katanga. The Security Council then passed a resolution allowing for the use of force. At that point they had only been allowed to defend themselves. Did this new resolution have a great effect on the Congo operation itself?

Linner: It gave us something more solid to stand on but our overriding ambition was the same, to avoid bloodshed. We went there not as a fighting army but as peace keepers. That remained our major objective.

JK: The complication of the Katanga secession had meant that the Belgian forces and the mercenaries were still in Katanga province. So, that hampered the UN in being able to complete its mission.

Linner: Those mercenaries were reckless.

JK: Several months passed and still the UN forces had not been able to control the situation in Katanga. Then Conor Cruise O'Brien came on in Elizabethville. With the new resolution he was given orders to have all the non-Congolese officers and mercenaries expelled from Katanga. What transpired at that point? Attempts to have them expelled went badly.

Linner: Those mercenaries were really soldiers of fortune. As I said before when I used the word reckless, they had several driving motivations, one was money -- whoever paid them better was their master -- the second was a total insensitivity towards the implications of what they were doing. They didn't see the whole picture. The third was a hatred of anything that smacked of communism. At that time, unlike today, communism was seen as a threat. I don't know how much they believed it but, it was a part of their psychological buildup. They saw Leopoldville as some sort of representative of communism and that Elizabethville was the stronghold of capitalism. And, of course, their contempt for the UN troops was beyond description. Our soldiers were not fighters like

the mercenaries. The mercenaries were there to kill. They had little if any understanding of soldiers who were there to save lives. It was a contradiction in character for them.

JK: We had talked earlier about O'Brien and his work there and whether or not he was the right person for this job. Actually his job turned out to be very complicated trying to expell the Belgians and the other mercenaries. Things became so confusing to the point that Hammarskjold felt that communications were breaking down. Was O'Brien receiving orders from you or from Hammarskjold and how were the orders passed down?

Linner: We are back to the communication problem again. He was taking orders from Leopoldville, from me, but there were times when communications were better between New York and Elizabethville than between New York and Leopoldville and certainly than between Leopoldville and Elizabethville. So, I wouldn't exclude at all that there were times when instructions came direct and were copied to us and reached who first was a matter of very often happenstance. I would stress the word confusion. The administrative lines were clear. Hammarskjold would not tolerate any deliberate muddling of the order giving structure. I was the officer in charge of the Congo operation, full stop. I was not officer in charge of the Congo operation minus Katanga, or minus this, that or the

other. So, that is the simple answer to your question. In reality, and that is what I am trying to point out, things didn't always work that way. In the same fashion, if you like, let me draw a parallel to what I said just a little while ago. Our relations even within Leopoldville with the Congolese authorities were sometimes complicated by the fact that communications broke down and the same thing in Elizabethville. We wanted a certain independence from our men in Elizabethville otherwise we couldn't break out of the bureaucratic structure.

JK: So they could respond to the situation as they saw it.

Linner: Yes, but within the mandate of the Security Council.

JK: As O'brien was trying to get the mercenaries out the Belgians began to hide them in the Belgian Consulate.

Linner: Indeed, they were playing a very dirty game. O'Brien had a tremendously complicated task.

JK: O'brien was given the warrants for the arrest of several people including Munongo and Tshombe. Then there was confusion as when they were to be arrested or if they were to be arrested.

Linner: The basic idea behind it all was to use everything that could serve to save us from bloodshed within the rules of our own ONUC instructions. That was the key piece. Things like that should not be used except in very exceptional circumstances. That was the rule.

JK: It seems as though the orders got somewhat confused or the situation was such that O'Brien felt he needed to act. So, in Elizabethville things became very chaotic. Then Hammarskjold was on his way to Leopoldville.

Linner: Yes. There was also another complicating factor and that is that the Indian commander had a Swedish colonel. And the Indian commander took certain liberites in his order giving and didn't always inform us, I am told.

JK: Was this Prem Chand in Elizabethville?

Linner Yes, it was, in Elizabethville. The Swede was extremely loyal to his Indian boss and did not report to us in Leopoldville about his difficulties. That came out only afterwards, long afterwards. So, we in Leopoldville were kept unaware of the internal difficulties in the military top structure between those two. That was a bad thing.

JK: In the mean time efforts had been made to try to invite Tshombe to Elizabethville for discussions and he had continued to refuse to come.

Linner: On the contrary, he continued to promise to come and then didn't turn up. That was Tshombe.

JK: Understandably to some extent he was concerned about his own safety.

Linner: Yes, but we suggested that we should meet in Brazaville on neutral ground but he was still reluctant. He was probably afraid and I don't blame him for that. But I do blame him for promising.

JK: He escaped Elizabethville during the chaos and Hammarskjold then arrived in Leopoldville. This is all building up to the fact that Hammarskjold felt that he needed to meet with Tshombe. When Hammareskjold arrived did you appraise him of the situation?

Linner: I did and I was very much against his going there. My main argument being Tshombe's utter unreliability. I said, "even if you go there and you make him promise whatever you want him to promise you can't rely on it for the next quarter of an hour or so. Why put your prestige on the line for a man like that?" And Hammarskjold explained to me the feeling in New York at that time and the need for it etc., etc. I gave up because he was the boss.

JK: Did he feel that if he met with Tshombe he could convince him?

Linner: He said, "I want to explore that possibility because with the prestige of the office of the Secretary- General, being as high as one can go, if that doesn't help then nothing would help." He felt he wanted to try that.

JK: So, his plane left Leopoldville to fly to Ndola, Rhodesia, where Tshombe was located.

Linner: We were supposed to go together.

JK: Were you supposed to go on the plane?

Linner: I was on the plane.

JK: You were on the plane.

Linner: Yes, the motors were revving up and we had the safety belts on and Hammarskjold was very tense. And he said as he was sitting as I am sitting now crossing his legs and moving one leg up and down. Then I knew this as a sure sign that he was tense. So, I asked him what was on his mind at that particular moment. And he said, "well, to be quite honest we are leaving, both of us now, the government in Leopoldville which is so fragile that anything could happen at any moment. If we are both away and with the communication problems [as we talked about before] being what they are heaven knows what could happen. Then I am in Elizabethville and there is chaos on both sides." So, I said, "if you want me to understand that you prefer me to stay here from our discussions the other night I am only too happy not to meet Tshombe again because it is useless." I had talked to him so many times and it was always the same story. He said, "I would prefer you to stay." Then he followed me down to the tarmac for a few minutes. He had stayed with us then in Leopoldville and he had left a translation of Martin Boober's I and Thou and we had been discussing it.

JK: So, you had been on the plane and then you got off and he went back on?

Linner: Yes, he continued on.

JK: Did you see anything unusual on the plane or were there

any people who came on board that you didn't know or who were unexpected?

Linner: No, nothing suspicious.

JK: I don't know if you have read Conor Cruise O'brien's play on this subject.

Linner: No, I didn't read it and I didn't see it. Frankly I was so disgusted by it.

JK: He had suggested that there was a strange person that had come on board that was carrying explosives and he wasn't really carefully searched and so forth.

Linner: I hate this kind of speculation in drama form. You can use your imagination for all sorts of purposes but I feel it is the extreme of bad taste to say that sort of thing about a man like Dag Hammarskjold. What Conor Cruise has done is write as an observer where he contradicts himself from what he later says in his book.

Dag Hammarskjold had decided to fly in and he told me that he was going to dismiss Conor Cruise O'brien at some juncture in Elizabethville.

JK: What were his reasons for dismissing him?

Linner: Bad judgement, bad tact.

JK: The plane took off and apparently flew an unusual route to Ndola. Then it crashed and it wasn't really terribly far from the airport as I understand. But when the plane didn't arrive in Ndola they just shut down the airport

and didn't do anything.

Linner: It's very strange, very strange. I went there and I saw two British gentlemen.

JK: So, you went to Ndola. When, the next day?

Linner: Yes, I think it was the next day. I can't swear on it but as soon as the reports came back. There was something very funny in the air among the British side. That's all I can say. I wouldn't exclude sabotage.

JK: Then was Hammarskjold's body brought back to Leopoldville?

Linner: Yes, and then taken to Sweden.

JK: How much longer after that did you stay on in the Congo?

Linner: I remember I asked to be relieved as soon as U Thant took over. He then replied that it would be bad if I abandoned the operation.

JK: After Hammarskjold's death fighting continued in the same way. Tshombe had still not given up on the secession. Had anything been resolved on these issues before you left?

Linner: I think that secession was no longer possible. It had become clear that secession was not the solution to the conflict by that time.

JK: U Thant became acting Secretary-General. Did he ask you to be a special representative?

Linner: He asked me to stay on in the Congo for some time, as long as I wanted. I thought he was probably right in

saying so. So, I stayed on until I felt I had done my bit. Then he sent me to Brussels. Behind that there is also a story. I had been arguing with Hammarskjold about whether we shouldn't have somebody in Brussels and preferably with a mandate including to keep in constant touch with the Belgian government to improve our relations with them by showing that we were anxious to understand their way of looking at things and to have the oportunity of explaining our way of looking at it. With the risk that it would have complicated issues even more for Brussels. But for various reasons Hammarskjold didn't think the time was right but given time he would have matured into the decision. By the way, I had also made the suggestion that from the beginning we should have invited the media. That, I'm afraid, was a mistake that we didn't invite them, easy to say afterwards. I made the suggestion that we should have at least one or two representatives of world known media, as for instance the a Economist of London, The New York Times, based at our headquarters with acces all the time to practically everything that was said and done. So that we would have somebody from outside the organization writing down the day to day history.

JK: Because there was so much confusing information coming out.

Linner: Of course, and we didn't have time ourselves to sit and

write diaries even if we would have loved to. Still today I regret that we didn't do that.

Then came the decision from U Thant and I went to Brussels. There I must pay tribute to Paul Henri Spaak who received me in the most friendly and cooperative way. I had constant access to him which was remarkable at the time when the Belgian public opinion was inflamed against the UN. He had the courage to maintain this contact. He made it clear and this is also an interesting thing. I remember I expressed my gratitude to him for having the benefit of sharing the problems with him and discussing with him in such a frequent way. And he said, "just don't exaggerate my importance. I am Prime Minister, true, but the real ruler is the chairman of the board of the Associete General. As long as you don't have them on your side there is little I can do. I'm the wrong man.

So, I went to the Associete General and requested a meeting with the chairman of the board and if possible his board and I got it. I think it was quite useful because they treated me in the beginning with considerable arogance thinking that I was one of those UN bureaucrats who has no idea of practical life and business. Having served in a company of LAMCO's size, when they realized I could read a balance account and talk business with them that opened up a quite different atmosphere. I had the chance of explaining to them that

we had never had any dream of obstructing their activities in the Congo. On the contrary, anything that could be produced, by all means, for the Belgians but also and not least the Congolese were our interest. Why should we interrupt anything? Quite elementary talks but they needed to be conducted at that time. And I am happy to say that when I left Spaak had arranged a farewell luncheon to which were invited the real topnotch in Brussels. A speach was made there which moved me deeply because a toast was given to the greatest statesman of our time, the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. If you think of what the attitude had been up until that moment about the Congo from the Belgian side in Brussels, it was quite something. So, I was trememdously pleased. From then on it was much easier to carry on discussions. They were less politically involved. They had their financial economic interests, certainly, but talked in a much more level headed way.

JK: In Belgium, did you have any dealings with the king?

Linner: I made it clear, since you ask, to Spaak that would the king request to see me I would, of course, be at his disposal after having cleared it with the Secretary-General. But I didn't have any mandate to see him.

JK: So, you didn't think that would be particularly productive?

Linner: I didn't think so at the time, and I don't think so now.

JK: Then you spent some time in London dealing with this subject. You have made some comments in looking back at what could or should have been done. In general do you have any other comments about the UN operation in the Congo and how successful it was in your view and what were some of the mistakes that were made?

Linner: Who was it that wrote about the battle of Waterloo? Was it Stendahl? There was a particular scene where there was this big ball, a dance, and a lady dancing with a general in command and she said, "how was it?" And he said something like, "I really don't know because I was in the middle of it." It is very hard for me to give an objective view of it all. Even if I tried my darnedest to be objective subconsciously you must realize that the defense mechanisms are up. One wants to consider an operation to which one has devoted so much enthusiasm and devotion and time and energy as a successful one. With that qualification I would say that after all the great clash between the Soviet Union and the United States that was threatening at the time to occur in connection with the Congo was touch and go. It was stalled and avoided. Who is to be given credit? Partly the UN at least for our unceasing efforts to get the parties talking to each other and to keep the peace.

Then there were the dealings behind the scene. Here I come to an episode that might

interest you, the meeting with President Kennedy afterwards. I was back at headquarters then having left the Congo and got a call from the President directly, which I thought was someone was pulling my leg. And he laughed and said "I understand that it is a bit unconventional but I would very much like you to come down to Washington and meet me and discuss the Congo situation."

JK: You were in New York at that time.

Linner: I was at UN headquarters in New York working with the Secretary-General on a debriefing assignment. I said that I would be honored and delighted but, of course, I had to clear it with the Secretary-General. I had at that time not been to Washington yet. I found it a bit funny for me to go down without his ok. But U Thant being the wise man that he was said to go down and say what you want. "It can't hurt and if it can help, so much the better." So, with that in mind I went down and met the President and to cut a long and for me fascinating story short the message that he wanted to convey was that he had sent a cable to the then Ambassador in Leopoldville, Edmund Gullion, signed by himself and not by the Secretary of State which was quite unusual, saying words to the effect that if our UN policy in the Congo towards promoting the fate of Gizenga didn't change he would feel obliged to reconsider the whole US

attitude toward not only the Congo operation but toward the UN in general. That was an extremely tough message. Ed Gullion and I were great friends and he took the liberty of kindly rushing over to my office and showing me this cable. He said, "What is your attitude?" My policy had been to support Gizenga's campaign to become prime minister because I thought that Gizenga was so utterly incompetent and such a rotten egg morally from any point of view that in stead of making him a martyr by somehow trying to stop him on his way to that position it was much better for him lose on his own. This was something that Washington couldn't understand. Gizenga was a communist. Ed said, "I stand by your point and your objective with the Secretary-General." He then told me, "you are on the spot. You are my man. I can't judge. You judge. I'll take the responsibility for what you judge." Then I said, "Ed, you say this but it is a bit risky." He said, "well, all right, we'll take that chance."

So, what Kennedy wanted to say was to explain this cable to me by pointing out the background, the McCarthyism witch hunt for communists, and the pressure he was under balancing internal politics with foreign policy which is a president's right and duty to do. I found it very impressive for the most powerful man in the world to waste his time in explaining this.

JK: He seemed to have had a great concern for events in the Congo.

Linner: Oh, yes, he was very much involved. And I told him a story about that, by the way, which in a sense helps to illustrate the kind of conditions we were working under. One day everything went bad both for Ed and me within our respective orders. He suggested that we go have lunch somewhere outside of the town together for a couple of hours. So, when we went there he told the head waiter that if anyone calls be it even the President tell them we are not here, neither he nor I. After a while the man came around and sent us a message that the President wants to talk to you. So, Ed said, "but I told you. Tell Kasavubu that you thought you saw us, perhaps, but we aren't here." "All right," the man said and he shuffled away slowly, very unperturbed. He came back the second time and said pointing at Ed, "ce n'est pas mon president, c'est le tiens."

JK: So, it was President Kennedy.

Linner: Yes, and when I told him that story, he laughed and almost fell out of the rocking chair he was sitting in. I said, "you just give an order to somebody 'get in touch with Ed Gullion in Leopoldville right away!' and then you have no idea what happens."

JK: They would even track you down out having lunch. That's a great story. But, for various reasons I understand

Kennedy did have a concern for the Congo and what was going on there and had supported the UN there.

Linner: Oh, yes, very much so.

JK: Are there any other comments that you'd like to make?

Linner: Well, I hope I don't repeat myself too much by pointing to the overall difficulties in communication that we had there. I think it is such a basic factor in our work. There are also some simple things that you may not immediately think of. The UN had no intelligence service and it can't ever have one for obvious reasons. But this means that we were deprived of a network of information that is considered basic for any government of some importance or even some less important. We were undermanned. I don't want to sound defensive but coming back to your question, I think we did by and large as good a job as we could reasonably expect.

JK: In terms of learning for other situations.

Linner: That is what I am trying to say. I have been preaching this over and over again in all kinds of conflicts be it a natural disaster somewhere, always see to it first that communications are established to prevent rumors, to prevent wrong information, to prevent all that. Still today it happens. Last time it was in Africa we had to speed -- not to mention Kampuchea from where I've just come -- food without really knowing or having our bearings because the communication system had broken

down. Looking at things after an interval of 30 years one has to try to bring oneself back to these very primitive working conditions. If you want me to sum up for my personal sake I am more happy than I can to have had the priviledge of working within a group of people that showed such devotion -- I used that word before and I repeat it --such unselfish conern for in this case the Congolese. It was great.

JK: Well, thank you so much.

Linner: Thank you for listening to my rambling.

INDEX OF NAMES

UNITED NATIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

I, Sture Linner (Interviewee) hereby agree to participate in the United Nations Oral History Project, sponsored by the Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies, and consent to the recording by magnetic audio tape of (an) interview(s) with Jean Krasno (Interviewer) on Nov. 8, 1990 (Date) at Stockholm (City), Sweden (State).

It is my understanding that a typed transcript will be made of such tape(s) and returned to me for any necessary corrections. I hereby agree that if for any reason I have not returned the transcript with my corrections to the Institution for Social and Policy Studies within three months of the time it was sent to me, the Project Staff may edit the transcript and make it available for research and other use as provided here below.

In the understanding that the tape(s) and transcript(s) will be preserved at the United Nations and made available for historical, scholarly and (as deemed appropriate by the United Nations) public information purposes, and that copies will be placed on deposit at Yale University for research and study, I hereby grant, assign, and transfer legal titles and all literary rights in the tape(s) and transcript(s) to the United Nations. However, it is agreed that neither the United Nations nor Yale University will publish or authorize publication of the transcript(s) or any part thereof during my lifetime without my written permission.

Sture Linner
(Interviewee)

Nov. 8 1990
(Date)

Jean E. Krasno
(Interviewer)

Nov. 8, 1990
(Date)

(For the Institution of Social and Policy Studies)

(Date)