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Tullberg, Andreas

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221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

# ‘We are in the Congo now’

Sweden and the Trinity of Peacekeeping  
during the Congo Crisis 1960–1964



**LUNDS**  
UNIVERSITET

Andreas Tullberg

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*For  
Malin, Clara & Alice*





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# 1. Introduction

*Behind a barracks in Elizabethville, 9 December 1961*

We struck up a hymn, accompanied by the [field-]organ and the whistling noises from projectiles and ricochets. Then [the battalion priest] followed. In the middle of the sermon we suddenly heard the well-known, horrid thuds from the opponents' mortars. Within twenty seconds the detonations would reach us. We looked at each other and glanced at the foxholes. We crouched or kneeled by the organ, but remained to give our comrade an honest farewell. A new sound then entered from close range. It was our mortars that opened fire in our defence.

The opponents' grenades hit close by as we sang a hymn with thin voices.<sup>1</sup>

As Jonas Wærn remembered it, the few soldiers that had gathered behind the barracks in the Swedish camp were the only ones who had been able to free themselves from their pressing duties in order to pay their respects to their fallen comrade. Private Nilsson was neither the first nor the last Swedish soldier to fall in battle in the Congo during the autumn and winter of 1961. But for the Battalion Commander, Jonas Wærn, it must have been a particularly strong memory, as Wærn had travelled in the same armoured car as Nilsson when he was killed.<sup>2</sup>

The 'December War' in Elizabethville in the southern part of the Congo had begun on the 5th, four days before Nilsson was shot. Some ten days of fighting later, on the morning of 16 December, the UN troops orchestrated

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<sup>1</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 341, All quotes have been translated by the author if not stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 334–341.

<sup>3</sup> This study uses the translations suggested in *Ordlista: Engelska, amerikanska och franska*

a large military offensive throughout the city with over 4,000 men. The explicit goal was to destroy the enemy resistance in the city. Among the attacking UN troops, the entire Swedish battalion of about 600 men took part. For several days, combat raged in the streets of Elizabethville as heavily armed UN soldiers attacked key sites in the city. In his December report to the Defence Staff<sup>3</sup> in Stockholm, Wærn described the UN attack as a last resort and in line with the UN's policy in the Congo.<sup>4</sup> Therefore it was necessary, planned and offensive.

In the political arena, however, descriptions of war and enemies did not correspond well with the Swedish peacekeeping effort. Hence, what was happening in Elizabethville was, in contrast to Wærn's description, presented in defensive terms by the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Östen Undén. In a speech before Parliament just hours before the attack on 16 December, he stated:

The fundamental principle of the UN's operation in the Congo is that the organization cannot be a part of the domestic conflict, nor can have within its objectives to enforce upon the Congolese certain solutions to their problems. ... The military forces cannot be used with such objectives. Instead, they shall perform tasks of police nature and in addition to that, by their very presence, serve the purpose of bringing the different groups in the Congo to reach agreements through negotiations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This study uses the translations suggested in *Ordlista: Engelska, amerikanska och franska benämningar på svenska, främst militära organ, befattningar och grader. Andra upplagan* (Försvarsstaben. Utrikesavdelningen, 1952). Hence, 'Försvarsstab' will be translated 'Defence Staff'; 'Arméstab' will be translated 'Army Staff'; and 'Bataljonsstab' will be translated 'Battalion HQ' (Headquarters).

<sup>4</sup> Kongorapport nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, pp. 2–13.

<sup>5</sup> 'Interpellationssvar avgivet av utrikesminister Undén den 15 december i riksdagens andra kammare', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961* (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p. 65.

The violence was therefore to be understood as unfortunate, somewhat surprising and from a Swedish perspective defensive, according to Undén. Neither was the term 'war' used.

Never before had a UN peace operation come so close to war as it did in the Congo in the early 1960s. For Swedes, whether being soldiers, politicians or just the public in general, it was an overwhelmingly new experience. For the first time since 1814 regular Swedish soldiers had been wounded or killed in battle. The news that the violence and chaos in the Congo had thrown the Swedish soldiers into lethal combat in Africa was met by a wide set of responses in Sweden, ranging from anger to pride, but was perhaps above all met by confusion. Dramatic headlines filled the Swedish newspapers in December 1961. 'Jungle drums call for total war', *Aftonbladet* wrote on 17 December.<sup>6</sup> The media did not hesitate to communicate the horrors of war in the Congo, and did so in a way that described the situation in Elizabethville as chaotic, violent and dangerous, and thus far from Wærn's planned and ordered offensive.

The reason Wærn's, Undén's and *Aftonbladet*'s descriptions of what took place in the Congo diverged was linked to them operating in different arenas of society. While Wærn and his men were at the scene fighting hard, Undén addressed the UN intervention in the Congo from the perspective of the Swedish participation as state actor. *Aftonbladet*'s journalists in turn tried to report from what they saw and heard in order to inform the public of what happened in the Congo. Given that they all in this way can be said to be right within their own domains, it opens up questions on how rhetoric and arguments in different arenas of society came together or diverged to form a contemporaneous understanding of Swedish participation in the *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo*, ONUC.

### *The 'new' and the 'old' peacekeepers*

Before I continue the study of the Swedish participation in the ONUC, there is a need for a brief discussion on peacekeeping studies in general in

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<sup>6</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 17/12/1961.

order to set some preliminary definitions of what peacekeeping means in this study.

Scholarly research into the field of peacekeeping and conflict management often draws a clear distinction between what has been called 'old' and 'new' peacekeeping. This separation is closely related to the division between the pre- and post-Cold War settings for international politics. Another argument for an 'old' or a 'new' prefix for peacekeeping has been the changing operational climate and strategies for peacekeeping missions. In fact, as will be shown below, the term peacekeeping itself has been argued as outdated. For sure peacekeeping is a problematic concept and therefore hard to define. It can be a description of a specific type of UN activity aimed at conflict management. As such it becomes related to policy issues and international politics. But the term can also be used to capture the specific type of work conducted by military units in the field. As such it relates more to operational questions and military strategy. Peacekeeping can furthermore refer to a consequence of a specific state's self-proclaimed responsibility to help those in need. From such a perspective, peacekeeping becomes related to arguments on, for instance, human rights and altruism. Needless to say, several other uses of the term peacekeeping or its implications can be thought of.

On 31 January 2008, 90,883 people worked under the authority of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the DPKO. Among those, the vast majority (75,893) were labelled 'troops'.<sup>7</sup> Not included in the statistics of the DPKO were all NATO-employed troops acting as 'peacekeepers' in places around the world. In a short period of time the number of UN sanctioned missions around the globe increased substantially. Just between 1988 and 1993 the troop total rose from 9,950 to some 80,000, and the number of troop-contributing countries from 26 (1988) to 76 (1994).<sup>8</sup> This momentous change over a short period of time has been marked a natural dividing line between what is generally called 'traditional' or 'classic' peacekeeping and what has been coined 'new

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<sup>7</sup> DPKO (2008), 'Monthly Summary of Contributors of Military and Civilian Police Personnel, by Mission Totals'.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor Findlay (1996), pp. 2–3.

peacekeeping'. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the notion of an emerging 'new world order' explain this shift. Since the political tension between the superpowers during the Cold War tended to have a hampering effect on the UN's ability to find consensus for its military actions, only limited and impartial missions could take place. In 1991 Russia replaced the Soviet Union in the UN Security Council. The new Russian leadership showed willingness to endorse a more active UN peace policy. For the UN and its member states this meant a gradual shift of motives for peacekeeping, including the easing of the accepted restrictions on peacekeeping. The traditional peacekeeping mission had worked along the guidelines of consent, impartiality and minimum use of force, as drawn up by Lester Pearson and Dag Hammarskjöld in connection with the UN peacekeeping mission to Suez in 1956. The new 'post-Cold War' peacekeepers on missions were now given the possibility, by both political and military means, to be more offensive or 'robust' in their work. It meant that the peacekeepers' mandates allowed for sturdier measures and that the peacekeepers carried more arms and protection than before. The thought of having the means and consensus to intervene on behalf of primarily human rights instead of peace and security further bolstered an era of change. However, the failures (political as well as military) in Rwanda, Bosnia and Somalia soon showed that change was not necessarily for the better. The field of peacekeeping was manifestly complex and confusing and left a lot of unanswered questions about the difference between war and peace, national and international, and civil and military matters. Leading UN representatives observed the changing nature of peace operations. The then Special Assistant to the United Nations Under-Secretary of Peacekeeping Operations, Shashi Tharoor, noted in 1995:

... classical, consensual peacekeeping does not respond fully to the world we live in and the challenges the new world disorder poses to the international community. ... We will not be able to face the twenty-first century by remaining firmly rooted in the twentieth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Shashi Tharoor (1996), p. 210.



The changes in peacekeeping practice also contributed to an expansion of academic studies as the scholarly field expanded rapidly and during the shift from Cold War to 'new world order', scholarly literature on the subject increased by some 350 per cent.<sup>10</sup> Peacekeeping literature and research are mainly found in the field of political science and the related fields of international relations (IR) and peace research. The Czech political scientist Oldrich Bures points out that the peacekeeping research field is both idiosyncratic and atheoretical. In peacekeeping studies the focus has for a long time been upon defining the concept and constructing macro-level systems for calculating the success or failure of peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, according to Bures, peacekeeping studies are often aimed at 'practical implementation and policy-related issues' in which research is orientated more to tackling the contemporary problems of peacekeeping than understanding the concept itself.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of the existing methodological challenges, the term 'peacekeeping' has been abandoned as an insufficient and outdated concept. New terms, more attuned to the new realities, have been suggested: 'robust peacekeeping', 'humanitarian intervention', 'wider peacekeeping' and 'multidimensional peace operations' arguably lie closer to the multifaceted objectives and the composition of today's peacekeeping missions. Such terms might be justified in order to deal with, for instance, heavily armed offensive military action in the name of human rights, or the in recent times significantly larger civilian and diplomatic portions of UN missions. Still, it further strengthens the dividing line between the 'old' and the 'new' peacekeepers.

The expressed concerns above also bring to attention some fundamental questions about international conflict management in general. As the peace operations become more robust and when the UN sanctions military operations executed by international coalitions of military forces led by the EU or NATO, the borderline between warfare and peacekeeping becomes blurred. When does peacekeeping become warfare, or perhaps, when does warfare become peacekeeping? Like the diffuse concept of 'new peacekeeping', the perception of what is conventional warfare becomes played down by, or incorporated in, similar new terms such as

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<sup>10</sup> Oldrich Bures (2007), p. 407.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 407, 433.

‘humanitarian intervention’, ‘multidimensional peace operations’ or ‘wider peacekeeping’. This further emphasizes the difficulty of defining soldiers as peacekeepers or warriors, national or international. A significant problem of modern-day peacekeeping or peace enforcement is that it could, in some way, be considered as something new and unprecedented and at the same time as a development of centuries of warfare and conflict management. Since the peacekeepers themselves are soldiers, and the field operative responsibility during peacekeeping operations is held by the military, the connection between the military and the peacekeepers is unavoidable.

It has been argued that the momentous change in the role of Western military forces after the Cold War has enabled us to talk of a postmodern military. The lack of traditional inter-state wars among Western states has challenged the traditional role of the national military. The military of today is more often authorized by international organizations and conducts missions that differ significantly from fighting wars.<sup>12</sup> As the postmodern military in this way enters into the domains of peacekeeping missions, researchers again seek to explain and understand peacekeeping as a new phenomenon, since the future missions of the military, according to Charles C. Moskos, ‘will be structured in ways fundamentally different from the relative certainties of the Cold War.’<sup>13</sup>

The two interconnected trends of ‘new peacekeeping’ and ‘new war’ in combination open up an interesting field of exploration for many scholarly disciplines. However rewarding such studies might be, they do appear to treat the shift from ‘old’ to ‘new’ in a way that leaves ‘classic peacekeeping’ partly unexplored. In cases when the peacekeeping missions between 1945 and 1989 are referred to, they tend to stand as examples or reference points from the past in order to sharpen the contrasts with what is considered new.<sup>14</sup> Notably, this division into periods or phases in some cases is not necessarily bound by specific periods of time, but stand as ideal models of types of missions. Alex Bellamy et al. argue that traditional peacekeeping, even though closely related to the Cold War period, was not exclusive to

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<sup>12</sup> Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams & David R. Segal (2000), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Andrew Cottey (2008), pp. 429–446.

that era. Rather, traditional peacekeeping should be defined as missions built on the three classic principles – consent, impartiality, and fire only in self-defence – and not dependent on when and where they are put into action.<sup>15</sup>

However, the classifications, whether by chronology or by types of missions, nevertheless rest on the assumption that some sort of general theory can be constructed in order to examine the theme of UN conflict management and peace and security. This kind of holistic approach therefore needs to address the problem from ‘above’ in a way that takes its departure from the UN itself or the missions at hand. James Mayall, for example, notes:

Every UN operation rests on two supports, the objectives pursued by the member states, and in the final analysis authorized by the Security Council, and their implementation by the Secretariat and/or the various UN agencies to which responsibility is delegated in the field.<sup>16</sup>

In this context states become the peacekeepers, rather than the troops they send, and the examination of peacekeeping begins with the international context in order to seek explanations and strategies. The prime actors in such a scheme are the UN itself and the member states as political actors within the UN. As states, in this way, become treated as single actors, little attention is given to the fact that each state actor in turn contains a number of sub-actors, such as public opinion, media or the military institution. By instead addressing the question of peacekeeping from the perspective of the troop-contributing nation, as carried out in this study, the various actors within a nation can be identified and analysed. A cultural understanding of peacekeeping as sets of parallel, and sometimes conflicting, contemporaneous interpretations, rooted in a cultural foundation, therefore brings challenges to the scholarly field of peacekeeping and peace management research since it emphasizes the aspect of continuity as well as change. What is ‘old’ or ‘new’ becomes open for negotiation and debate

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<sup>15</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams & Stuart Griffin (2006), pp. 95–110.

<sup>16</sup> James Mayall (2007), p. 17.

rather than determined by external factors like the end of the Cold War or new operational tactics. In fact, Robert A. Rubinstein argues, the often assumed notion that post-Cold War interventions are more complex or even substantially different from 'classical' peacekeeping missions can partly be explained by the lack of research into the latter.<sup>17</sup>

Even though this study is limited to the Swedish context and to the ONUC, I would still argue that it in some sense transcends the supposed differences between the 'old' and the 'new' peacekeeping research fields. For one it will show the importance of interplay between different actors within the Swedish context in order to understand the broader workings of the contemporaneous perceptions of the peacekeeping mission. From studying the ONUC we can see the Swedish government, media and battalions trying to explain, define and tell the story of what Sweden's role as a peacekeeper ought to be. The dramatic events during the ONUC helped to enhance those descriptions and intensify the debate surrounding them. Examining the 'old' missions this way place the modern missions in a different light, since the actors are more or less the same. The question: what is 'new'? has then more to do with what potentially new elements are at work within the classical relationship between the government, media and military, than it has to do with international politics, military structure or robust mandates. It also highlights many of the themes that are not new, but resemble themes from the 'old' missions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 136.

<sup>18</sup> As a recent example of this the commander of the Swedish FS19 in Afghanistan, Gustaf Fahl, wrote in *Svenska Dagbladet* 2010: '[The Swedish media focus too much on] counting the number of engagements and bombardments and discussions on dates for a Swedish withdrawal. ... It is therefore urgent, for the sake of both my soldiers and their relatives, to describe what is actually achieved by the Swedish effort. I would thereby like to offset the unfortunate depiction that Swedish soldiers sacrifice their lives in vain.' (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 22/10/2010). Fahl's article shows how the military recognizes the importance of the 'home front' media in building a purpose for the mission and determining the ingredients of success. Implicitly Fahl's reasoning can be understood as an invitation to the Swedish media to support the Swedish soldier's work by reporting truthfully and objectively about all events, not just combat. In not doing so, the media does not take its moral responsibility for the Swedish efforts. This notion, as we shall see, correlates well with themes from the ONUC in the 1960s.

What then, do I mean with a ‘cultural approach to peacekeeping’?

### *A cultural approach to peacekeeping*

While the study of culture and the study of peacekeeping both are large fields of scholarly research the two seldom meet.<sup>19</sup> Rubinstein has suggested that the absence of attention to culture and meaning in peacekeeping is problematic since intervention in itself relies heavy on expectations, image and reputation in order to be successful. He continues:

In estimating economic cycles, for instance, much credence is given to consumer confidence as basis for economic actions. This is not because it is an empirical indicator of the strength of an economy but because it has become a symbolic artefact that translates into real actions on the part of consumers and investors.

In the same way, ‘peacekeeping confidence’ translates into real actions on the ground by local populations and by mission participants.<sup>20</sup>

One can of course note that Rubinstein’s suggestion works the other way around, meaning that actions on the ground effect the confidence in the mission.

This study is about Swedish peacekeeping and adopts the notion that several different perceptions and definitions of what a peacekeeping mission was or ought to be were in play during the ONUC from 1960 to 1964. From the perspective of the Swedish participation and in light of the dramatic events in the Congo, the study seeks to analyse those different contemporaneous interpretations, compare them and examine if and how they relate to each other. Hence it is suggested that a contemporary cultural understanding of Swedish peacekeeping needs to be open to the hypothesis that actors in different societal arenas understand, motivate, judge and legitimize events

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<sup>19</sup> Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 8–12; Tamara Duffey (2007), p. 143–147.

<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 143.

and actions differently. In other words: the reason for, or outcome of, an event in a peacekeeping context might be interpreted or explained in different ways by the media, the government and the military. Hence, the diverse arenas of society can also be used as analytical categories, or nodes of analysis, as further discussed in Chapter 2.

The cultural approach is also open to the suggestion that the contemporaneous descriptions and narratives of a peacekeeping mission were rooted in, or at least influenced by, some sort of pre-understanding of what the operation was supposed to be and what was desirable to achieve. Who was to be protected from whom, and why? For the ONUC this meant that before and during the mission there existed one or several understandings of Sweden's role as an international peacekeeper and Swedish soldiers' role as peacekeepers. Those understandings in turn needed to be attached to a set of national values and myths. Otherwise they would have been culturally illogical. Or as the sociologist Philip Smith argues, there needs to be a 'cultural foundation' for conflict.<sup>21</sup>

### *The peacekeeper soldier*

To identify at least one general ingredient in all UN military missions, the *national military* of participating countries are involved. The missions involve a variety of professionals from medical personnel to observers and police. The main bulk, however, consists of troops. The necessity of military skilled staff is obvious, as peacekeeping work is sometimes very dangerous. The mission employees need to have the ability and the competence to defend themselves and their objectives, with firepower if necessary. The UN has no troops of its own and the only military skilled personnel available to the UN are, of course, the national forces of its member states. The state-run military is foremost just a *national* military, part of the national institution of self-defence. The member state chooses to respond to the UN call for troops to a certain mission. If so, it sends parts of its military forces to participate. The national military responds directly to the will of its state, and therefore indirectly to the UN.

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<sup>21</sup> Philip Smith (2005), pp. 10–11.

The soldier, as well as the organization he/she is a part of, is a product of, and in the service of, the nation-state. The national military stands on a firm ground of traditions, symbols and rituals expressed through pride, history, monuments, flags, oaths, medals, etc.<sup>22</sup> In the past the sense of duty to protect one's home has frequently driven men to risk their lives for a cause, stated by the nation. In fact, the military institution must collectively prepare for substantial high-intensity warfare, since the large-scale capability that a state needs to have cannot be quickly achieved.<sup>23</sup> Peacekeeping, on the other hand, is generally carried out by small voluntary units with limited military resources. Peacekeepers are not supposed to be involved in combat. Peacekeeping, from this perspective, is thus a contradiction. Sandra Withworth captures this nicely:

[O]n the one hand, [peacekeeping] depends on the individuals ... that have been constructed as [national] soldiers, and on the other hand, it demands that they deny many of the traits they have come to understand being a soldier entails.<sup>24</sup>

The Swedish UN battalions that were deployed and fought in the Congo in the early 1960s were formed and trained within the Swedish Army structure. While the Swedish Army had a prime purpose of homeland defence, the Swedish battalions fighting in the Congo were not defending their homeland.

Unlike 'traditional' peacekeeping, the new forms of peacekeeping have more offensive mandates and the peacekeepers in turn are better equipped to handle 'robust' types of missions. However, the discussion on mental aspects of what it means to be a 'new peacekeeper' remains unresolved. The sociologist Daniel Blocq has argued that the new forms of robust peacekeeping, for the protection of civilians and in the service of human

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<sup>22</sup> As an example, the Swedish Military has a 338-page instruction manual on ceremonies. See 'Instruktion för Försvarsmakten, Ceremonier 2010', 21/12/2010, [www.forsvarsmakten.se/dokument](http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/dokument) (accessed 27/9/2011).

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Christopher Dandeker & James Gow (2000), pp. 58–79.

<sup>24</sup> Sandra Withworth (2004), p. 3.

rights, are not synchronized with the moral and psychological preparedness of the Western military. Western soldiers, according to Blocq, are generally far too rooted in the traditions of the national military, its purposes and framework, to be able to transcend to some sort of 'cosmo-political' peacekeeping which demands that the soldier fights, kills and perhaps dies for something that lies outside the notion of national self-defence.<sup>25</sup> Combat situations, in particular, during peacekeeping missions therefore generate problems of motive construction: 'For what or whom are we fighting?' While Blocq is concerned with soldier motives, his argument can easily be lifted to the level of a national dilemma. On the national scene this becomes especially conspicuous in the case of operational setbacks and/or soldiers fallen in battle. Just as the military, the public and the government must then also deal with the question of relativity: 'Is it worth it?' As the humanitarian argument perhaps is not as strong as the national interest, this might create a problem for the troop-sending state, the UN, and, in a wider sense, the concept of peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention. Such questions lead to a realization that peacekeeping, at least in the cases when combat elevates the problems, has the possibility to raise the same questions as in the case of war. Again, viewing the questions from the framework of the (troop-sending) state, war is an activity that involves many segments of society; not just the soldier in the field or the military institution they serve, but also civil society, including the media and the government.

#### *The case of the Congo, 1960–1964*

This thesis is about Swedish peacekeeping in the Congo, 1960–1964. It should be made clear that the study is not about the Congo per se. The UN mission to the Congo was chosen because Swedish peacekeepers worked there and, particularly, because they fought there. The study is therefore far more concentrated on questions concerning the Swedish participation than on the Congo itself or the UN. Of central interest are the Swedish peacekeeping battalions that served in the ONUC throughout the entire mission between 1960 and 1964, Swedish public opinion expressed through

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel Blocq (2010), pp. 290–309.



the media, and the political leadership in the shape of the Swedish government.

If there is any an overall theme to raise, it is that of the national description of peacekeeping. That is to say, the contemporaneous interpretation of a peacekeeping mission as it was constructed and perceived by the military, media and the government is in focus. This point of departure also means that the non-Swedish part of the ONUC, the political turns in the UN and even the dramatic events in the Congo itself will be examined with the Swedish national story of peacekeeping in mind.

The Congo case has been chosen on the basis on what actually happened to the Swedish peacekeepers abroad. It was in the Congo troops operated. The Congolese view of the events in Katanga between 1960 and 1964 is not heard at all. Neither are the Congolese views of Sweden or their views of Swedish soldiers in the Congo heard. However interesting and rewarding these voices would be, this is another subject. The comparative ingredient is not the one between Sweden and the Congo; it is between different structures *within* Sweden. Swedish soldiers did not go to the Congo because the Congo needed the assistance of Swedish troops, but because the UN requested help in a mission that happened to take place in the Congo. From such a perspective, the Congo case was chosen as the object of study because it enables a study to be conducted about Swedish peacekeeping.

Secondly, the ONUC has been chosen because of what actually happened during the mission. The ONUC stands out as a particularly violent mission in Swedish peacekeeping history. Especially during the autumn and winter of 1961, the 12th and 14th Battalions fought hard in the Katangan provincial capital of Elizabethville. Swedish soldiers on the peacekeeping mission both killed and died in 1961. The violent confrontations between Swedish UN troops and the Katangan gendarmerie is a key ingredient in the analysis of the Swedish peacekeeping mission to the Congo. This is because it highlighted the questions of motive and purpose in a way that would never had been the case in the absence of violence. The actual combat situations that occurred demanded responses, arguments and explanations from different actors. Questions like 'Who is the enemy?' or 'Why are we doing this?' had to be dealt with by soldiers, media and the government.

### *The purpose of and questions for the study*

The case of the Swedish participation cannot in itself be used to generalize about peacekeeping as a whole. The absence of a later case with which that of the ONUC can be compared makes the study fall short of any deeper cultural challenge to the division of 'old' and 'new' peacekeeping as discussed above. Certainly, other rewarding aspects of comparison can be thought of. For instance, comparing the Swedish contemporaneous experience in the Congo with another contributing nation's experience would be of interest. Both Ireland and India had an equivalent number of soldiers in service in the Congo and also operated in the same theatre as the Swedes, and their national experiences of earlier wars or state formation might, by comparison and contrast, be used to evaluate the Swedish understanding of the ONUC.<sup>26</sup> The broad approach to the Swedish Congo mission and the scope of sources used leaves little room to make such comparisons at this stage. Nevertheless, the study does not lack comparisons. On the contrary, the analytic three-level approach of the media, the military and the government creates an excellent setting for comparison, as their interpretations of the Congo mission diverge from or support each other.

History can, most simply, be described as a series of events. From any event follows a multitude of stories, news, interpretations and discussions that give the event meaning. The interpretations might vary considerably depending on who discusses the event or what purpose the interpretation is supposed to fill. Interpretations and explanations of major events might over time even become sturdy national historical narratives. Yet other events might be more or less forgotten. The Swedish participation in the ONUC, even as summarized and remembered, cannot be said to be a major event within a Swedish national narrative. Still, for those who participated at that time, including the soldiers as well as the journalists and politicians, what happened needed to be told, discussed, understood and placed into context. Immediately as the events happened in the Congo, different contemporaneous descriptions and arguments made their way into military reports, newspapers and political speeches. The Swedish participation in the

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<sup>26</sup> Lars Ericson Wolke has made a short operational comparison between the Irish and Swedish contingents in 1961; see Lars Ericson Wolke (2007), pp. 119–128.

ONUC, as its participants perceived it, must therefore be understood as a series of events, rather than a single experience looked upon and explained from a distance in time. The different interpretations of the ONUC mission therefore become something other than 'history'. Nevertheless, this study is both 'traditional history' in the sense that the study is event-driven, and a cultural study in the sense that the different contemporaneous interpretations and explanations initiated by those events are analysed and compared.

The purpose of this study can thus be summarized as tracing the contemporaneous interpretations of the Swedish peacekeeping mission in the Congo, 1960–1964, with emphasis on the outbreak of violence in 1960, 1961 and late 1962. As discussed above, there are many different explanations, and part of the task is therefore to identify what is of dominating concern at respective node of analysis. While it is safe to say that all of the involved soldiers, politicians, relatives or journalists who experienced the Congo crisis had their own individual, particular stories, it is the more generalized contemporaneous understandings that are examined. One is the interpretation by the Swedish military, which includes the Swedish Army more generally as well as the Congo battalions themselves while in service. Another is that of the Swedish media, as expressed through reports and editorials; and finally there are the arguments and rhetoric of politics and political leadership of 'official Sweden'. Three questions to these respective nodes of analysis can be asked:

- ❖ Which motives were given for Swedish participation in the ONUC, and did they change?
- ❖ How were the combat experiences interpreted and incorporated within a context of peacekeeping?
- ❖ How did those motives and interpretations correlate with the understanding of what peacekeeping ought to be?

In order to see how the understanding of the Swedish ONUC participation was constructed, it therefore becomes a research question to examine how these interpretations came together or diverged from each other during the

succession of events in Congo. A key ingredient, as earlier argued, and therefore at the centre of this study, is the military violence, and particularly that which involved the Swedish battalions. War, combat and casualties ultimately have a tendency to become front-page news and the object of political debate, as well as, of course, strong (and sometimes traumatic) experiences for those who encountered it first-hand. In other words: it needed to be explained, understood and dealt with within each node of analysis.

For the above questions concerning the contemporaneous stories making sense, two more questions must be asked. First:

- ❖ What did the ideal model for Swedish peacekeeping in the 1960s look like?

This question is theoretical rather than empirical. No ideal role model was explicitly discussed in the material examined. However, from the sources such a model can be constructed and placed as a norm against which deviations become clearer. How those deviations were discussed and evaluated becomes a question of how Swedish participation in the ONUC correlated with the Swedish cultural foundation as discussed above. Or, formulated as a research question:

- ❖ How did the perception of peacekeeping in the Congo relate to the Swedish cultural foundation?

### *Outlines for the study*

The study is organized into ten chapters. The following chapter, *The trinity of peacekeeping*, presents the theoretical as well as methodological settings for the study. The discussion of the three-nodes approach to Swedish peacekeeping in the 1960s is related to a modified version of Carl von Clausewitz's notion of the 'trinity of war'. The model is also complemented with a cultural perspective that further develops the concept of the Swedish

‘cultural foundation’. Combined, the trinitarian model and the notion of the cultural foundation serve as an overall framework for the study.

Chapter 3, *The United Nations and the Congo crisis, 1960–1964*, gives a short and mostly descriptive background to the Congo crisis from a political and event-driven perspective.

Chapter 4 examines the preconditions and the decision-making in Sweden before the ONUC. The chapter elaborates on the political and media arguments motivating the decision to participate in the ONUC. It also examines the military perspective and the process of forming the Swedish ONUC battalions. In Chapter 5 I discuss the conditions in which the battalions worked, the command structure, and the ‘abnormality’ of peacekeeping duty.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examine three ‘phases’ of military involvement, focusing on the Baluba attacks on the train escorts in late 1960 and early 1961 (Chapter 6), the extensive fighting in September and December 1961 (Chapter 7), and the assault on Kaminaville in late 1962 (Chapter 8). Chapter 9, *Keeping the peace in the Congo*, examines the battalions’ expressions of the Swedish cultural foundation through their views on, and use of, the larger themes of modernization, racism and humanism. Finally, Chapter 10, *‘We are in the Congo now’*, sums up the findings and draws the conclusions of the study.

#### *Earlier studies on the ONUC and Swedish peacekeeping*

The literature on peacekeeping is massive and moves between studies of war, peace, international relations and law. The UN operation in the Congo is often depicted as a unique experience for the UN and the international community. Deployed as a peacekeeping force in the midst of an incipient civil war in 1960, it soon turned out to show little resemblance with preceding UN interventions. Unlike the Korean War, 1950–1953, which was largely a US-controlled operation with very limited UN involvement,

despite the latter's Chapter VII mandate,<sup>27</sup> the Congo mission was labelled a peacekeeping operation and remained in the hands of UN civilian and military representatives. Likewise, it differed from preceding peacekeeping operations like the UNEF (deployed in Egypt in 1956) or the UNOGIL (deployed in Lebanon, 1958) by the fact that the mission was given a mandate for the use of force; a mandate also used, while remaining a peacekeeping operation on paper.<sup>28</sup> The operation also developed into an extremely complex mission in which UN soldiers found themselves under attack as well as ordered to undertake offensive military missions.

As discussed earlier, literature and research in the field of military enterprises are often policy-orientated and related to the concept of *Lessons Learned*. Depending on the level of analysis, lessons learned deal with questions of legitimacy and institutional proceedings, the future for peacekeeping as a concept, or, on a military level, the evaluation of military performance, tactics and equipment. The discussion on the Congo experience has many levels of analysis. On an international and institutional level the discussion on the Congo mission revolved, and still revolves, around the UN's ability, need and legal grounds to use force. From such a perspective, the ONUC becomes interesting as a case when UN principles of peacekeeping contradict realities in the field. The Security Council and the Secretary General saw the situation in the Congo evolve into war-like conditions with UN troops taking an active part in the fighting. In a time of tense Cold War presence, developments in the Congo were closely monitored and active diplomacy, rule-bending, negotiations and individual initiatives within a context of confusion became symbolic features during the Congo mission. Academic literature on the institutional level of the ONUC gives a more or

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<sup>27</sup> The combined South Korean and US forces in the Korean War constituted more than 90% of the ground forces, 92% of the naval forces and nearly 100% of the air forces. The force commander reported to Washington, see Tommie Sjöberg (2006), pp. 404–405.

<sup>28</sup> Trevor Findlay (2002), p. 51.

less unanimous description of the UN 'breaking the rules' as it was 'stumbling into war'.<sup>29</sup>

Trevor Findlay argues that the ONUC created a traumatic time for the UN, as it was compared to the norm of peacekeeping created for the UNEF and hence was deemed a complete failure. 'No more Congo' became a slogan that had a 'sobering effect on UN peacekeeping for decades'. No one came to the conclusion that the ONUC could be treated as the first UN-controlled peace-enforcement operation and, as such, not a complete failure. Indeed, Findlay remarks that 'had the lessons of the Congo been learned and retained, the mistakes of the latter missions [in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone] might never have occurred'.<sup>30</sup> First of all, the ONUC experience highlighted the need for clear labelling of activity. In other words: clarity on whether a mission is a peacekeeping mission or a peace-enforcement operation. Letting the peacekeeping operation slip into peace-enforcement without the proper Chapter VII mandate created an opportunity for well-founded criticism of the mission, the Secretary General, and the UN itself as being partial. It also put the men in the field in a position where they did not have the proper equipment or manpower to efficiently deal with the new tasks. Also, the UN mission (just as similar ones today) was politically sensitive and therefore needed strong political control acting in support of what was happening in the field rather than reacting to what the UN personnel were doing.<sup>31</sup> From a legal perspective, however, professor of international law Georges Abi-Saab argues that the ONUC increased the political significance of the United Nations. The use of international law, as was shown in the case of the Congo, became a powerful tool in enabling its subjects to achieve collectively what they could not do individually.<sup>32</sup> The legal scholar Olof Beckman notes that the

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<sup>29</sup> Trevor Findlay (2002), p. 51; Andrzej Sitkowski (2006), p. 63; Sven Bernhard Gareis & Johannes Varwick (2005), pp. 101–102; Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams & Stuart Griffin (2006), pp. 72–73.

<sup>30</sup> Trevor Findlay (2002), pp. 82, 87–88; See also John Terence O'Neill, (2002), pp. 127–144.

<sup>31</sup> Trevor Findlay (2002), pp. 82–86. Andrzej Sitkowski (2006), pp. 73–74. Sitkowski also concludes that important lessons on peacekeeping and peace-enforcement were never learnt.

<sup>32</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 198–199; See also Olof Beckman (2005), pp. 99–109.

arguments in the Security Council and General Assembly supporting the UN intervention were relatively coherent:

Essentially, the internal power struggle [in the Congo] was claimed to have generated an illegitimate Government, which was held responsible for the lack of law and order and the ensuing chaos. It was then argued that this situation was putting foreign nationals, foremost Europeans, in mortal danger. While ensuring that armed protection of a State's citizens was in conformity with international law as a part of some right to self-defense, the case was embedded in a context of humanitarian motives without specific reference to legal provisions.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the ability of Dag Hammarskjöld to interpret and use international law during the Congo crisis enabled the Secretary General to use it as a tool of diplomacy. It could be used aggressively against adversaries in order to spur desired action, as well as defensively against criticism of the UN's inability to act. As such, Georges Abi-Saab argues, international law in the hands of Hammarskjöld was used for legal strategy and institution-building as well as social engineering.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, viewed in the light of international law, rather than military matters, the 'fuzziness' of international law in the case of the Congo might not have been as undesirable as Findlay suggests. This line of argument further stresses the level of complexity and contradictions that lies in the political and military aspects of peacekeeping missions.

Turning to the specific case of Swedish participation in the ONUC, the military experience per se has been at the centre of a few studies. Analyses focusing on Swedish military participation in the ONUC in general draw an image of stressful military work in a context of political confusion. The latest contribution to the military experience of the Swedish battalions in the ONUC is Lars Ericson Wolke's *Lessons learned?* that primarily deals with the

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<sup>33</sup> Olof Beckman (2005), p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 193–195.



military tactical and operational experiences of the mission.<sup>35</sup> Taking a military perspective, the peace mission lies close to war, and for Ericson Wolke the lessons learned boil down to classic statements on how to win a war. Those lessons revolve around the importance of efficient air support, the ability to fight in larger, combined units, efficient intelligence services, communication, and the necessity of a working military infrastructure in general. However, Ericson Wolke also points to some additional lessons that perhaps relate more to international peace operations than war-fighting in general. Those lessons include the clear *end state*, or the aim of the operation that from the beginning is set as a goal that needs to be reached for the mission to be labelled a success and for the international troops to be withdrawn. Such an end state was never given during the Congo mission. Besides the psychological disadvantage of not having a defined goal, the lack of clear objectives also risks putting the military in a position where it finds itself under-equipped as the duration of the mission constantly extends. Also, the ability to withstand and deal with psychological warfare, for instance in the shape of accusations of misbehaviour in the field, is essential for troop morale. In the Congo the 'enemy's' skilful use of anti-UN propaganda also helped undermine the legitimacy of the mission. During the ONUC such accusations came from several directions, including the Swedish press. Moreover, and the most interesting of Ericson Wolke's conclusions, is the remark that while the Congo mission started out as a classic peacekeeping mission, the workload of the battalion and its soldiers increased dramatically as the fighting began. The battalions were still expected to carry out the duty of refugee protection, food and medicine deliveries, upholding law and order and rebuilding the infrastructure. As Ericson Wolke points out: 'New duties were added, but few or none dropped off'.<sup>36</sup>

Former Army Commander-in-Chief (1976–1984) Nils Sköld gives a similar account of the Swedish presence in the Congo in his book *Med FN i Kongo* (With the UN in the Congo). In addition to the political history of the Congo crisis and the involvement of UN forces, Sköld describes in detail the events around the Swedish battalions. In his analysis of the experiences of

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<sup>35</sup> Lars Ericson Wolke (2007).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 132–133.

the military involvement, Sköld strictly sticks to an evaluation of how duties placed on Swedish troops were executed. From such an operational perspective, Sköld finds the Swedish efforts in the Congo almost flawless.<sup>37</sup>

A less laudatory description of the Swedish participation has been given by the journalist Claes J.B. Löfgren in his book *Fredsknektarna*.<sup>38</sup> His study from 1990 includes several interviews of those who were involved: soldiers, military leaders, mercenaries and politicians. Besides the stories of dramatic combat and individual heroism, Löfgren also elaborates on the themes of suffering and racism, based on individual accounts on what went on in the Congo. Löfgren's book clearly highlights the plenitude of often conflicting stories from the ONUC. The confrontations with the native population and the many stories of racism, prostitution and brutalization by the ONUC have also led to recent portrayals of the Swedish participation as a complete and utter failure. Raoul J. Granqvist draws on Löfgren in his summing-up of the ONUC as 'a failed, brutal journey in the company of a large gang of naïve Swedish country-boys who collapse ... in front of the threat from the Other, whether being the Congolese or the Belgians.'<sup>39</sup> For Granqvist, hence, the ONUC fitted well into the dark history of the Congo, as yet another phase of brutality and imperialism. The parallels to Joseph Conrad's description of the brutality of Leopold's regime in the late 19th century are obvious, Granqvist notes. The myth of the 'good Swede' as truly altruistic was nevertheless strong in the 1960s.<sup>40</sup>

Depending on perspective, the story of the ONUC manifests itself very differently. It seems, however, that Granqvist fails to see the context in which the soldiers (and not missionaries or explorers) were placed, trying to prevent civil war and assaults on civilians. Likewise, Sköld and others arguably pay too little attention to the sometimes brutal and disparaging ways this work was done. My study is not concerned with the rights and wrongs of the conflicting stories of Swedish participation in the ONUC, but

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<sup>37</sup> Nils Sköld (1994).

<sup>38</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990).

<sup>39</sup> Raoul J. Granqvist (2001), p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 121. In fact a new Swedish translation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* came in 1960, Raoul J. Granqvist (2001), p. 122.

rather assumes that both stories exist for a reason. More interesting, then, are the contemporaneous descriptions of the ONUC in the early 1960s.

Traditional soldiering in a peacekeeping context is less explored in earlier literature. One such study in a Swedish context is Eva Johansson's *The UNknown Soldier*.<sup>41</sup> Her study is concerned with the Swedish UN battalions serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1993 and 1998 and is focused on the soldier identity. Initially she presents a series of 'identity levels', from the level closest to the individual (like family and friends) via the military unit identity to the identity level of a sense of participation in the greater story of UN motives or Swedish peacekeeping history. Unlike this study on the Swedish story of the ONUC at the time, Johansson's is primarily interested in the soldier's own mission experience and perceptions. Yet her examination reveals that the 'mental model of a peace soldier' for Swedish soldiers in the former Yugoslavia included both 'peace angels' (here understood as the 'old' peacekeepers) and the 'warriors for peace' (the 'new' peacekeepers).<sup>42</sup>

The Swedish participation in the ONUC is the history of a national military placed in an international context in a diffuse borderland between peacemaking and war-fighting, and it raises questions concerning the institutional military's relation to war and peace, national and international, the soldier profession, the Cold War and human rights. It was a national military trained and prepared for a war of national self-defence, equipped with national and institutional rituals of military tradition, but (at least in the case of the Swedish battalions) with no earlier experience of war. Or, as the then UN official Brian Urquhart described it in 1963: '[I]t [the UN force] was deployed with bewildering speed into obscure and totally unexpected situations, while being constantly restrained by political directives which make a mockery of established military principles'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Eva Johansson, (2001).

<sup>42</sup> Eva Johansson, (2001), p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> Brian Urquhart (1963), p. 346. In 1963 Urquhart was the Principal Officer in the Office of the Under-Secretary for Special Political Affairs of the United Nations.

## 2. The trinity of peacekeeping

### *Clausewitz and a trinity of peacekeeping*

In order to manage the vast numbers of actors and the wide range of different materials needed for this study, it is necessary to develop a theoretical and methodological model. The model must embrace the different nodes of analysis, the different actors, and allow them to affect and interact with each other. Carl von Clausewitz presented a basic setting for such a model in his famous *On War* from 1832.

Carl von Clausewitz's trinitarian theory of war has been extensively examined and debated by scholars for more than a hundred years. It is not my intention to get involved in, or contribute to, that debate, but rather to use Clausewitz's preliminary setting of the trinity as a theoretical and methodological point of departure.<sup>44</sup>

War, Clausewitz argues, needs to be examined as composed of three ingredients. First, war is about hatred and animosity, which Clausewitz calls 'blind instinct'. Second, it is about probabilities and chance, which makes it a 'free activity of the soul.' Third, it is an object of political strategy and hence also a political tool to achieve the strategy.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, Clausewitz argues, war involves the *people*, and their attitudes towards the war; the *military*, and its soldiers fighting the war; and the *political leadership* using the war to achieve political goals. Since Clausewitz, after all, has had such a profound impact on how – at least European – military scholars think about war, it would be a mistake not to see the usefulness of Clausewitz's trinity when it can be applied. It should be noted that Clausewitz's trinity actually is a double trinity. First, it involves the three aspects (or tendencies) of war: 'hatred and animosity', 'probabilities and chance' and 'politics'. Second, it

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<sup>44</sup> For an extensive examination of Clausewitz's trinity of war, see Thomas Waldman (2009).

<sup>45</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, (1997), p. 24.

involves three nodes of analysis: 'the people', 'the general and his soldiers' and 'the government'. Any theory of war must take all these aspects and actors into account in order to understand war, Clausewitz argues:

[T]heory shall keep itself poised in between these three tendencies, as between three points of attraction.<sup>46</sup>

It might initially seem strange to argue that Clausewitz's theories of war in the 19th century could have any bearing on peacekeeping in the 1960s. The use of theory, however, is flexible and it is within the power of each scholar to alter and calibrate theories in order to make them useful. However, there are some problems that need to be addressed.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that Clausewitz's elaboration on what war really is has a claim of universality to it that has triggered extensive criticism among students of war. With reference to pre-Westphalian European history as well as non-European cultures, scholars like John Keegan and Martin van Creveld have shown that Clausewitz failed to give a general answer to the question of what war *really is* that can withstand the challenges by the many forms of war that exist or have existed.<sup>48</sup> The trinity can simply not be said to be universal in time and space. Therefore, it has been argued, Clausewitz's idea of the trinitarian war cannot be applied to modern conflicts, or at least not all modern conflicts.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> The following discussion on Clausewitz and the theory of a trinity of peacekeeping has earlier been published by the author in 'Fredsbevarandets treenighet. Svenska FN-insatser och Clausewitz teori om krig', in Lars Berggren, Klas-Göran Karlsson & Charlotte Tornbjör, (eds.) (2010), pp. 92–96.

<sup>48</sup> John Keegan, (2005), pp. 23–44; Martin van Creveld, (1991), pp. 35–42.

<sup>49</sup> Martin van Creveld has argued that the Clausewitzian trinity war was waged by the state, for the state and against the state. In fact, this state-driven definition of war became further consolidated in law during the 19th century. Furthermore, it helped in defining non-European wars as not being wars at all, which in turn plays a part in explaining, for instance, the exceptional cruelty in wars of colonization. van Creveld uses this argument to show that many conflicts, even in Clausewitz's own time, cannot be explained or studied through the trinity approach. That is to say, as long as the conflicting elements cannot be divided into the people, the army and the government, or when a politically rational goal cannot be stated to be a cause of conflict, the

Certainly peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations have been held to be such new forms of conflicts.<sup>50</sup> I would partly agree with this criticism. Clausewitz's claim of universality has had a hampering effect on the usefulness of his theory. Still, by loosening Clausewitz's claim of universal truths, his theory of the trinity of war can be seen as one possible approach to how a conflict, even a peacekeeping mission, can be analysed. Notably, critics of Clausewitz's trinity argue that his actors, or 'empirical categories' as once suggested by Clausewitz, do not wage modern-day wars. Hence, they comment that since it is not 'states', 'generals' or 'people', but rather international organizations, mercenaries, warlords and terrorists who fight the wars, Clausewitz and his understanding of war are obsolete.<sup>51</sup> War in Clausewitz's sense *made* the state, as it combined the 'tendencies' of passion, probability and policy to achieve a common collective goal. That is why Clausewitz referred to the trinity as 'wonderful', the political scientist Mary Kaldor argues. Consequently, the notion of war as a Western nation-building process leads to a conclusion that the trinity model is valid only when applied to those times. In order to 'free' the trinity from the European 19th century and make it applicable to modern wars, Kaldor suggests that focus is placed on the tendencies of 'passion', 'chance' and 'politics' rather than their presupposed corresponding empirical categories. 'All wars are, of course, about violence framed in political terms. It is the political justification that makes killing in war different from murder', Kaldor

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Clausewitzian analysis will fail. (Martin van Creveld (1991), pp. 35–42, 49–57). While this might be true to the point of recognizing that conflicts and violence today do not always consist of a war-declaring government, are supported by a people or even fought by 'real' soldiers, it still does not mean that the trinity approach cannot be used when the war fulfils those criteria. Thus, as long as nations send soldiers the trinity exists. If those soldiers find themselves in combat, even minor and defensive, during a peacekeeping mission, there will be an interaction within the trinity. The interaction will perhaps not be of the magnitude of a large-scale European war. Furthermore, the fact that Clausewitz's theories were constructed in the early 19th century does not mean that they are not useful today. Rational politics in the way Clausewitz meant (like territorial expansion or restoring the balance of power) is perhaps not valid today, but we can certainly enrich the 'political rational' with contents of our own time.

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard Kümmel (2006), p. 421.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Kaldor, (2010), p. 276. Kaldor is mainly referring to Keegan and van Creveld.

argues.<sup>52</sup> Just as patriotism was a unifying passion that was evoked and spread through and by war in the 19th century, religious, ethnic or other passions motivate and connect new actors in war. This is why Clausewitz's trinity can still be used in understanding modern conflict, according to Kaldor. Thus in her view, Clausewitz's trinity can be made useful when separated from the state context and its empirical categories. Kaldor's point is interesting as a defence of Clausewitz. However, given the strong national context in which the present study is situated, a more rewarding way to 'free' the trinity from the 19th century is to separate it from war itself rather than the state context. This is admittedly a bold move since the two are intimately connected. The Clausewitz scholar Hew Strachan even suggests that in fact the synthesis of the trinity is war.<sup>53</sup> Yet to say that the trinity does not exist except in war would be wrong. When focusing on a particular state rather than a particular war, we must suggest that that state, and thereby its empirical categories of people, army and government, must have had some sort of understanding of just motives for war, acceptable consequences of war, preparedness for war, or ideas of what war is, prior to war itself. When military violence then presents itself to the trinitarian model, the use of the term war itself will emerge as a subject for contemporary debate and definition as it becomes related to the motives and consequences of the conflict. Adding the aspect of cultural foundation further highlights the usefulness of the trinity, since it allows the different nodes of analysis to interact in times of conflict. This will be discussed in more depth below.

How, then, is this useful in relation to the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo? Clausewitz's 'tendencies' should benefit from clarifications. Firstly, it could easily be argued that 'hatred and animosity' are not (or should not be) a part of, or a necessary ingredient in, peacekeeping. Here Clausewitz's point is that a public support for war is needed since, after all, it is the people who send their sons and daughters to war. Likewise, it is the people who hold the government responsible and in the case of democracies elect it. 'Hatred and animosity' can here be replaced by emotions (not necessarily negative or belligerent emotions) towards a conflict or contemporary

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 277. Kaldor presents the views of Hew Strachan; see Strachan (2007), p. 44.

descriptions of a conflict. Thus, the perception of the conflict includes motives, enemies, causes, etc. Secondly, Clausewitz's notion of 'possibility and chance' can be translated to simply mean that events matter. How the conflict actually develops and its consequences has significant bearing on the attitudes towards it. Hence, the dramatic events of the peacekeeping mission are likely to be the situations when arguments are needed. In other words, it is the events that create the 'disturbance' in the trinity and trigger arguments. For a peacekeeping mission, those events can be a number of different things. For instance, the decision to send troops in the first place, a radical political statement or the capture of prisoners can undoubtedly spur verbal conflicts. Nevertheless, the actual combat incidents, when occurring, and their immediate consequences must be treated as the predominant events in this context. Clausewitz uses the term 'frictions'. These occur when what is seen as a simple task in theory turns out to be a lot harder to accomplish in reality, which in turn triggers unforeseen consequences.<sup>54</sup> As war is synonymous with opposing groups of soldiers trying to upset each others' plans, unplanned situations will eventually appear. In the case where particular combat situation is not planned or expected, the combat itself could therefore be seen as a friction. The term friction as used in this study has been expanded to include the friction between nodes of analysis, as interpretations of events in the Congo came to diverge and therefore challenged the consensus of the trinity. This will be further discussed below.

Thirdly, and finally, the notion of rational politics is as valid in our time as in Clausewitz's. This was Kaldor's point above. Conflict is political and must be politically motivated in one way or another. This is the rational contemplation of means and ends. While those means and ends perhaps are not the same as those in Clausewitz's time, it does not mean they do not exist.

Besides the three tendencies, there are the three actors, or rather the three nodes of analysis. First, Clausewitz's notion of the people needs clarification.

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<sup>54</sup> Clausewitz gives his meaning of 'friction' a more limited definition than is implied here. For him, friction meant unforeseen complications in the field, and something that therefore primarily was of concern for the field commander. Examples of such friction could be a fog, which suddenly makes the enemy hard to spot, or bad weather causing orders to be delayed. Carl von Clausewitz (1997), pp. 66–69.



In Clausewitz's time, war meant the possible invasion of one's nation by huge armies; a scenario that threatened the collective safety of the people. War, therefore, concerned large portions of the civilian population. In the case of Sweden's role in the Congo peacekeeping mission, the situation was quite different. No threat of invasion of the Swedish mainland, or any need for a mobilization of the civil defence, existed as a consequence of the Congo crisis. Some sort of 'public opinion' of the people must therefore be sought among those who expressed arguments and descriptions of the conflict but belonged to neither the military nor the government. We must turn to the media. The national media will here represent public opinion, not because they can claim to capture the actual thoughts and opinions of an entire people (they most probably cannot), but because they are the expression of a public opinion that influences the other two actors: the military and the government. For them, the newspaper-reading soldiers and politicians, the media represent the attitudes of the public. The Media as representative of a public discourse is further discussed below.

Second, we have the military themselves. Here it can be argued that in 1960 remarkably little had changed in Sweden since the time of Clausewitz in terms of organization, main purpose and place in society. This will be dealt with further in a subsequent chapter. It should be noted that the Swedish Army in the 1960s was a large institution, trained and organized to resist a large-scale military invasion. Mandatory military service guaranteed that all men from 18 to 47 could serve as soldiers if needed. It was from this organization that the UN volunteers were recruited.

The political leadership makes up the third and final node of analysis in Clausewitz's trinity. In the case of this study it refers to the Swedish government, and particularly to the dominant Social Democratic Party and the Department of Foreign Affairs. This was where the political arguments and goals for the operation were formulated. This was where the 'official Sweden' argued about the ONUC, the UN and the Congo. As in the case of the two other nodes of analysis, the Swedish government needed to confirm or re-evaluate 'the Swedish position' as events in the Congo unfolded.

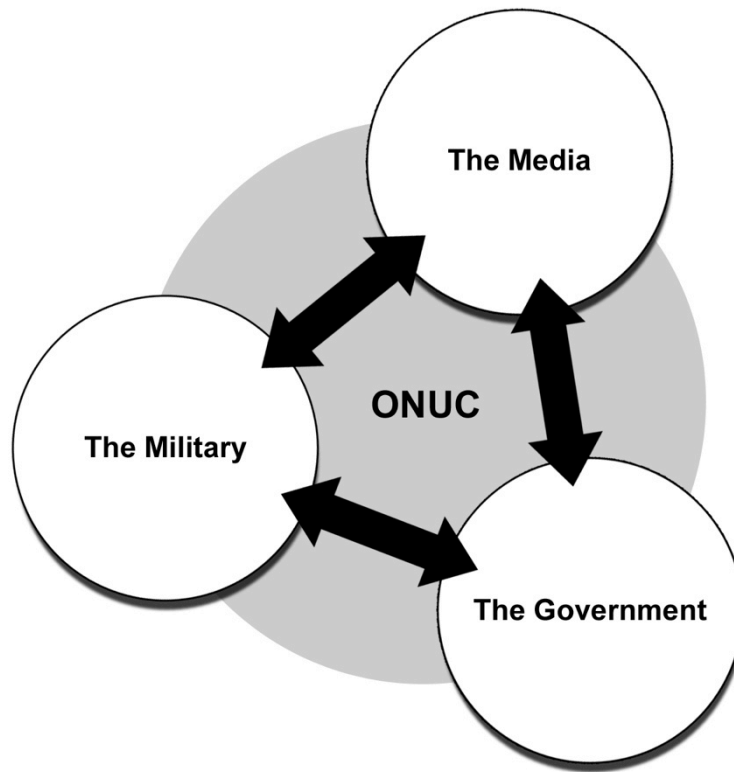


Image 1. The trinity of Sweden and the ONUC

A peacekeeping mission does not necessarily provoke much domestic disagreement. In fact many peace missions do not. If a mission does not deviate much from its pre-understood form, accepted by a majority within all three nodes of analysis, it poses few problems for the troop-sending state. The pre-understood and accepted form for a peacekeeping mission includes broad political agreement, enough volunteering soldiers, a legitimate UN mandate, and the execution of the mission in a way that is in harmony with the beforehand-settled idea of how it should be (the goals of the mission are fulfilled according to the mandate without anyone being hurt). Especially in regard to the last criterion, this is not often the case, and certainly was not the case during long periods of the ONUC operation. Unpredicted and

unwanted events at the actual scene of the mission, in Clausewitz's terms frictions, posed challenges to the former national consensus. 'What are we doing there?' 'What or who are we fighting for or against?' 'Are the risks and goals in balance?'<sup>55</sup> As central themes within the former consensus in this way were called into question, it also uncovered the fact that the 'we' above could refer to many things. Hence, to treat the 'we' as, for instance, 'the Swedish people' would probably lead to different answers than if the 'we' was treated as 'Sweden, the UN member' or 'the Swedish ONUC battalions'. This confusion, in turn, has the ability to 'disturb' the trinity model.

### *Cultural foundation, friction and the trinity of peacekeeping*

Before further discussing the specific content of the Swedish cultural foundation as understood in this study, the relationship between the terms culture, friction and trinity needs to be specified. The easiest way to view this relationship is to imagine friction as a force trying to disrupt or destroy the trinity of peacekeeping, whereas the cultural foundation works as a counterforce, or a 'glue' holding the trinity together.

Each node of analysis in the trinity of peacekeeping had a pre-understanding of what peacekeeping was or ought to be. The pre-understanding of the concept of Swedish peacekeeping, in turn, produced arguments, interpretations and motives. Those motives were not necessarily distinctive from each other at different nodes of analysis. However, they might be prioritized differently or be of unclear meaning. For instance, the motive 'to assist and help the Congo' could have a multitude of different meanings. It could mean one thing as political rhetoric, another as a newspaper editorial, and yet another as operational instructions for a UN battalion. Nevertheless, all public motives needed to be rooted in the cultural foundation, which is the set of values and myths that served to explain why any motives were good, reasonable and logical within the Swedish context. The argument 'to assist and help the Congo' would thus be in line with the cultural foundation in the 1960s, since it, for instance, implied that Sweden and

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), pp. 114–115.

Swedes were neutral, had an altruistic approach to the so called Third World and were well-suited for such a task.

The dramatic events in the Congo, especially the combat situations that involved the Swedish battalions, came to challenge the apparent consensus. Each event or series of events in the Congo then placed the arguments and motives in a different context. 'To assist and help the Congo' was hence transformed to questions like 'What price are we willing to pay to assist and help the Congo?' or 'Are we under these conditions able to assist and help the Congo?' As strategies to answer those pressing questions were dealt with differently by, and sometimes also within, each node of analysis, it created friction that disturbed the trinity. When dealing with those new questions of motives, the cultural foundation again serves to define what is good, reasonable and logical. Notably, the friction can never challenge the cultural foundation itself; it can only create a situation where the peacekeeping mission is at odds with the cultural foundation, and hence creates a condition where it is hard to sustain support for the mission.

### *The cultural foundation*

In order to 'disturb' the trinity, however, there must be some form of 'undisturbed', or at least 'less disturbed', relationship between nodes beforehand. The preparations and arguments in connection with the specific decision to send troops to the Congo in the first place is the theme of Chapter 4, which sheds light on the situation in 1960. The trinity model, however, would here be left empty without a discussion regarding the 'cultural foundation' upon which the nodes of analysis within the model are placed.

The term 'culture' is in itself a broad term, and analytically troublesome to use. Here, culture, or peacekeeping culture, should rather simply be understood as the attitudes, values and mentalities concerning peacekeeping shared in Swedish society during the early 1960s. In a wider sense, the 'peacekeeping culture' therefore relates to questions and attitudes towards Sweden's role in international affairs in general. In other words, it becomes a question of how the Swedish self-perception affects the attitudes towards Sweden as a peacekeeping nation. In connection to the ONUC, this will be

clarified in the concluding chapter of this thesis, but even at this stage it is important to explore the theme of culture in general terms.

As the historian Klas-Göran Karlsson points out, it is not an easy task to discern a society's self-perception, since this includes not only the dominating civil and human perceptions and evaluation of a society's fundamental structures, but also its organization, relations of power and possibility of development. Put differently, self-perception, Karlsson continues, 'is therefore not in the first place about politics or ideology, even though political and ideological aspects are involved, but about culture.'<sup>56</sup> But where does one find expressions of the cultural self-perception of a society? Philip Smith has argued that one valid way to find the cultural patterns of a society is to turn to the media or public society in general. After all, people tend to buy and read newspapers they generally like, trust or respect. In other words, major newspapers can be said to adhere to the cultural foundations of a society quite simply because of their magnitude.<sup>57</sup> According to Smith, it is central to acknowledge that cultural foundations of a society therefore make their way to the 'forefront' of the public debate. That is to say, what is expressed in newspapers or political speeches needs to have a cultural logic; it would otherwise not make sense to those who are meant to read or hear them.<sup>58</sup> This does not mean that there are no debates, but rather that any serious debate needs to be true to the core values of the culture in which the debate is situated. The historian Ulf Zander has, with reference to Torsten Thurén, argued that in every society there are therefore parallel perspectives of both consensus and conflict within each debate. This is illustrated by Thurén's metaphor of a medieval castle. In the centre stands the citadel, representing the core values exemplified by democracy, religious orientation and 'good taste'. Outside the citadel there is a courtyard, surrounded by walls. In the courtyard a struggle continually occurs, pushing arguments and debates into the public arena in order to gain the privilege of interpreting the central values of the citadel.<sup>59</sup> The point of the metaphor is that the struggle occurs in plain sight, or 'on the stage', for all in the castle to

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<sup>56</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson (1999), p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Philip Smith (2005), p 52.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Smith (2005), pp. 10–11.

<sup>59</sup> Ulf Zander (2001), p. 61.

view. Outside the walls lurk the evil forces that seek to destroy the citadel itself. Those forces are not allowed to participate in the struggle. In the case of war and conflict, for instance, arguments regarding motives, descriptions of threats, presentations of reasons as well as criticism of the same, need to be in line with a cultural foundation; otherwise war will be hard to sustain, or, as Smith puts it:

Fighting without the correct cultural systems in play is like driving with the parking brake on. It can be done but it is rarely a good idea. Sooner or later there are clouds of smoke and the wheels fall off.<sup>60</sup>

Whether speaking of cultural foundations, central values or national mythology, it is important to grasp the collective attitudes in Sweden in the early 1960s in order to anchor the Clausewitzian trinity in what was a particularly Swedish framework. Without anticipating the results of subsequent chapters, which are more concerned with the specific ingredients of the respective analytic nodes, the aim here will be a broader sketch based on some of the literature covering the Swedish self-perception.

There is a consensus among scholars that Swedish self-perception in the early 1960s was based on the notion of Sweden as being a modern country. In fact, Zander argues, the strong economic growth beginning in the 1940s and lasting without interruption until the 1970s placed the early 1960s in the midst of a 'golden age'. This idea of a rapidly modernizing country is explained by the fact that Sweden had had the benefit of undisturbed development, as it had avoided being drawn into any of the two World Wars. This also meant that there were grounds to believe that Sweden therefore could serve as a desirable example for others to emulate.<sup>61</sup> Inevitably, the self-perception of Sweden as a peaceful nation, Zander continues, 'became an important component in the Swedish post-war identity'.<sup>62</sup> 'The Swedish success story' has been rightfully criticized by

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<sup>60</sup> Philip Smith (2005), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Ulf Zander (2001), pp. 320–321, 462.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

Swedish historians in recent times, who show that a great deal of internal violence through mainly the first half of the 20th century has been treated as an anomaly in the greater story of Sweden, partly because of the Social Democratic Party's rise to power and long political rule in Sweden.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, in the early 1960s the prevailing self-perception of Sweden as 'moral superpower' was at its peak. Not only was Sweden a modern country in regard to technical achievements, but also more importantly it was seen as a forerunner in social reforms including education, health care and the struggle against poverty. Also, Sweden was believed to be a place where all citizens had more or less the same possibilities to receive higher education and build a career, including a political one. Furthermore, and most significantly, this had all, according to the national myth, been achieved within a national consensus free of violence.<sup>64</sup> Rune Johansson has called this self-perception of the so-called Swedish Model a 'welfare nationalism'.<sup>65</sup> It also carried the assumption that the Swedish Model was superior to any other way of socio-economically structuring a society.

For the purpose of this study we now turn to how this self-perception also became a cornerstone in the Swedish foreign policy.<sup>66</sup> Again, the following chapters present empirical evidence that this was the case, but are concerned explicitly with questions regarding the much more limited subject of Swedish participation in the ONUC.

The notion of a peaceful Sweden, and perhaps even more so the notion of the uniqueness of that peacefulness, became further reinforced by the Cold War.<sup>67</sup> Now the Swedish position between the two political and ideological power blocs became fully apparent. In addition, as Bo Stråth argues, the economic success of Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s activated 'a link from

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<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, Lars Edgren & Magnus Olofsson (2009).

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, Glover's analysis of the informational, seven-part TV series *The Face of Sweden – A Series of Self-Portraits* (1963). This was produced by the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the American Network for Educational Television. Nikolas Glover (2011), pp. 96–106.

<sup>65</sup> Rune Johansson (2004), pp. 109–120.

<sup>66</sup> Compare Rubinstein's notion of 'root metaphor', Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 50.

<sup>67</sup> Ulf Zander (2001), p. 320.

the neutrality concept to the demarcation from Europe'.<sup>68</sup> It was thought evident that the ability to uphold neutrality alongside the Swedish Model was due to Sweden being the opposite of Catholic, conservative and capitalist Europe.<sup>69</sup> This way of 'national thinking' left Sweden as an international outsider, linked neither to any of the Cold War superpowers nor to anything in 'old Europe'. Rune Johansson calls it a kind of Swedish 'splendid isolation' that emphasized idiosyncrasy and superiority.<sup>70</sup> Isolation and neutrality were, however, in no way synonymous with international passivity. The Swedish foreign policy was on the contrary rather active; by scholars even thought of as a planned strategy to make the continuation of Swedish non-alignment known globally. One natural forum for this rhetorical export of the Swedish self-perception became the United Nations.<sup>71</sup> Chapter 4 looks further into the Swedish international rhetoric in the forum of the United Nations in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

### *The small state with the huge responsibility*

Besides working for the promotion of international peace through cooperation in the United Nations, the active foreign policy also included a wider sense of humanitarianism and anti-colonialism. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Östen Undén, had early on used a sometimes rather heated anti-colonial rhetoric, arguing for peoples' right to self-determination. Likewise, the Swedish media had at the outset of the operation criticized the former Belgian rule in the Congo, placing most of the blame for the civil unrest in the Congo on the Belgians' inability to prepare the Congo for independence. The Swedish position was not unique in this regard. Kenan Malik has argued that the post-war period saw a change of views on colonialism in the general political discourse. The late 19th-century belief in the superiority and thereby responsibility of the Western powers to help the colonies organize functional societies based on Christianity and Western

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<sup>68</sup> Bo Stråth (2004), p. 154.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 154–155.

<sup>70</sup> Rune Johansson (2004), pp. 117–118.

<sup>71</sup> Andreas Tullberg (2010), p. 89; Magnus Jerneck (2009), pp. 83–85; Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson & Karl Molin (2008), pp. 205–209.



dominance (or, put in Kipling's famous phrase, 'the white man's burden') had started to erode to a point where it simply was no longer tenable. The main reasons for this development, according to Malik, were threefold. First, the Western colonial powers could no longer be seen as having any rightful claims of constituting role models, seen in the light of the horrors committed in the two World Wars. Secondly, many uprisings in the 'Third World' had turned out to be successes, at least from the viewpoint of showing that the white man was not invincible and could be defeated in war. However, most important, Malik argues, was the impact of the Cold War itself. The Soviet anti-imperialist rhetoric, including its support to ideas of racial equality and self-determination, gained sympathy among many nationalist movements in the 'Third World'. Placed before the imminent threat of many of the new states falling into the Soviet sphere of influence, the old colonial powers had to alter their attitude and, at least rhetorically, support the claims of equality and a right to self-determination. This, according to Malik, was a strong contributing factor that helped speed along the process of decolonization.<sup>72</sup> While this component did change attitudes towards the rights of the new states in Africa and Asia in the public discourse, it did not mean that the old forms of Western belief in cultural and racial superiority vanished. It was rather, as Malik puts it, 'held at arm's length by the realpolitik of the Cold War.'<sup>73</sup>

Even though Swedish political rhetoric regarding decolonization and peoples' right to self-determination therefore was not unique, there existed, according to Bjereld, Johansson and Molin, an understanding among Swedish politicians that Sweden still had a unique position between the two ideological systems of the Cold War. Criticism had been directed both East- and Westward. The Swedish position, or the middle way, also brought with it an inherent duty to, as far as possible, mediate and contribute to the easing of tension between the superpowers.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, Sweden had no former colonial interests to guard. In fact, Sweden had no modern colonial history whatsoever, and neither had it lost any wars outside Europe nor participated in any of the two World Wars. The historian Agneta Edman

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<sup>72</sup> Kenan Malik (1996), pp. 210–211.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>74</sup> Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson & Karl Molin (2008), pp. 147–150.

has correspondingly traced a shift among Swedish intellectuals, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, from the world viewed from an East–West perspective towards a North–South perspective that came to alter the Swedish ‘international consciousness’. Her examination of Swedish travelogues further reinforces the notion of a self-image in Sweden as being a leading country on the path of social evolution and therefore having a responsibility to expose the evils of colonization.<sup>75</sup> Obviously, the non-colonial Sweden had managed to stay out of two World Wars and had avoided being drawn into any of the two spheres of influence during the Cold War. It had a well-functioning democracy, a welfare system and a healthy population.

Swedish political rhetoric could therefore be seen as deriving from a national self-image of a genuine belief in Sweden as being one of the best and most well-organized societies in the world. The foreign policy towards the ‘Third World’ thus to a large extent became thought of as *genuinely* altruistic, far more so than the policy of other nations, because of Sweden’s lack of hidden agendas. Likewise, the solution for the developing world could therefore easily be formulated with Sweden as a particularly good role model; the type of society to strive for. In early 1961 Prime Minister Tage Erlander spoke before Parliament, stating that

We believe, that the solidarity that has meant so much for the harmonic development of the Swedish society should be spread over borders and include other countries and peoples.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Agneta Edman (2004), pp. 161–186. Martin Wiklund has found the same pattern in ‘the new Left’ that treated the Cold War not ‘as a struggle between democracy and dictatorship. It was the former colonies’ struggle for freedom that was the important contemporary conflict to relate to.’ Martin Wiklund (2004), p. 249.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Anförande av statsminister Erlander i remissdebatten i riksdagens andra kammare (utdrag: hjälpen till utvecklingsländerna)’, 24/1/1961 in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p. 7.

This attitude towards the new nations certainly brings to mind portions of the notion of the 'white man's burden', albeit different ones. One such big difference from the old colonial powers, and a belief also widely shared in Sweden, was that Sweden was a small and insignificant country in regard to its military and economic power. This in turn was the main reason for using the UN to forward the policies, and thereby also one of the reasons for the wide support of the UN in Sweden. The UN certainly offered a forum for Swedish foreign policy. The smallness also helped in supporting the claim of genuinely wanting to help. Erlander continued:

[F]or us small countries, that no one can suspect of having colonial interests, dreams of becoming a great power or other interests, there could be nothing more meaningful than to engage in a widened programme of fostering.<sup>77</sup>

The 'programme of fostering' Erlander spoke of related to the foreign aid projects Sweden was involved in. In the mid-1950s foreign aid started to become a recurrent matter on the Swedish government's agenda. Also, since 1954 Sweden had had a Foreign Aid Minister responsible for coordinating the aid. While initially modest in scale, the foreign aid grew steadily during the 1960s, as did public support of it.<sup>78</sup> In 1962 Parliament passed a government bill on foreign aid, one stating the purpose of Swedish aid as both altruistic and humanitarian, but also as being in line with a national interest of creating political stability as well as new markets for Swedish exports. The Foreign Aid Bill of 1962 further stressed the unique position Sweden had, due to being outside the Cold War and having no colonial history. This, according to the bill, would mean that 'Sweden could enjoy the confidence of the under-developed countries'; something that further added to the responsibilities of Sweden in particular.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson & Karl Molin (2008), pp. 209–215.

<sup>79</sup> Prop. 100/1962, pp. 5–6. 'Bihang till riksdagens protokoll år 1962. Första samlingen. Tolfte bandet. Kungl. Maj:ts propositioner nr 97–106', Stockholm 1962.

This line of reasoning about uniqueness was also applied to the peacekeeping mission in the Congo. In 1960 *Svenska Dagbladet* argued that Scandinavians were particularly suited for 'fragile international missions', since one could assume their neutrality in the midst of the East–West tension. The Congo mission, however, was 'so special and fragile that attention is drawn only to one of the Scandinavian countries, Sweden.'<sup>80</sup> The good reputation and confidence in Sweden also meant a lot of confidence in Swedes, the newspaper argued, which of course could be seen by the fact that many significant posts, such as the UN Secretary General and the ONUC Force Commander, were held by Swedes.<sup>81</sup>

### *Bringing in the army*

As argued earlier, Clausewitz's trinity model allows us to view the military as a separate node of analysis, yet closely related to the others. This prompts the question of to what extent the armed forces can be said to share the Swedish 'cultural framework' and self-perception, and to what extent differ.

While Smith's examination of the cultural logic of war deals mainly with 'society' at large – in his understanding, the media and political public discourses – the cultural foundation can likewise easily be transferred explicitly to the military as a part of society. In his book on US soldiers in Vietnam, Sanimir Resic for instance argues that one facet of the combat soldier's self-perception before deployment rested on a collective national self-image or 'national mythology'. For the US soldiers who would serve in Vietnam, this meant the possibility to serve in the forces of a 'chosen nation' with a 'manifest destiny'. This expressed itself in a widely shared belief in a superior moral claim that, among many things, also was based on the fact that the USA had never lost a war.<sup>82</sup> As Resic points out, there is a cultural explanation for why nations go to war, in part unique for each nation. Consequently, Resic continues, 'there is an American way of war that is in accordance with the American way of life and American culture.'<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/7/1960.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Sanimir Resic (1999), pp. 68–70.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

Naturally, the Vietnam War would later challenge the notion of the unbeatable and morally superior American forces. Resic's study is relevant because it connects the cultural foundation to the self-perception of the military. For the Swedish battalions in the Congo, hence, the national values or 'superior moral claims' as being particularly well-suited for the job as peacekeepers was part of 'the Swedish way of peacekeeping'.

Still, the military and civil society are not similar in every aspect. Literature on the civil-military relationship is generally concerned with what sort of relationship that is preferable in order to allow civil society to control the armed forces without undermining their ability to fight. In his classic work *The Soldier and the State* first published in 1957, Samuel P. Huntington argues:

The military institutions of any society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from the threats to society's security and a societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideology, and institutions dominant within the society.<sup>84</sup>

The balance between the two imperatives and the potential conflicts between them differ from one society to another, Huntington continues, but the total dominance of either one of them is unwanted. A military institution built entirely on the imperative of the external (or internal) threat to the society becomes unnaturally detached from the central values of that society and in the end impossible to contain. On the other hand: a military institution that is not partly based on the imperative of threat might become unable to perform its military function.<sup>85</sup> Huntington wrote in an American context and his problem formulation should therefore, unlike the case of Sweden, be seen in the context of a professional (or semi-professional) military institution. Nevertheless, Huntington's emphasis on two imperatives is interesting to consider just because it thereby recognizes that

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<sup>84</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1985), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

even though the military is and should be a part of society, it still fills a very special role in that society.

Turning to the Swedish military–civil relationship in the 1960s, one might initially question whether such a dichotomy even existed. Marie Cronqvist has argued that the ever-present threat of apocalyptic nuclear war during the Cold War dissolved many former strong dichotomies between the military institution and civil society. The Cold War was a potential war that existed everywhere and nowhere, and in which the only present front was the home front.<sup>86</sup> From the 1940s Sweden developed a civil defence inspired by the idea that the protection of the nation was the concern of every citizen. In practical terms this meant, among other things, that every citizen would be guaranteed room in a bomb shelter. It also meant that civil society, as well as every family, was supposed to be involved in a sort of ‘mental preparedness’ for a potential nuclear conflict through the organization of a civil defence. The purpose was that in the case of a major conflict every member of society would know what to do and how the authorities would act. The cornerstone of the civil defence was therefore information.<sup>87</sup> By the 1980s Sweden had developed the second largest civil defence (in dollars per capita) in the world, while during the late 1950s and early 1960s several major exercises (culminating in the evacuation of Stockholm in 1961) marked the height of the plan to involve civil society in military preparedness.<sup>88</sup> Cronqvist therefore, along with historian Laura McEnaney, argues that military concerns, approaches and structures in part became adopted by civil society, which led to a ‘militarization of everyday life.’<sup>89</sup> The fact that Sweden had no real modern war experience at all meant that the civil defence and civil–military relationship had never been tested. Whether Sweden in fact had a ‘mental preparedness’ or not is questionable, but in this particular context not relevant. The absence of war instead supports the claim that the military and civil society shared most parts of the cultural foundation, since there indeed existed no large group of citizens with direct experience of war.

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<sup>86</sup> Marie Cronqvist (2009), p. 172.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173, see also Marie Cronqvist (2008), pp. 451–476.

<sup>89</sup> Marie Cronqvist (2009), p. 172. (Quote from Laura McEnaney).

Considering further that Sweden by the 1960s had had a long-lasting system of compulsory military service for all men, it can be argued that a large part of the militarized civil society had, was due to, or currently served in the military.<sup>90</sup> Viewing the military institution as shaped by the two imperatives of the believed military threat and the values of civil society, as Huntington suggests, it can hence be argued that there existed a great deal of overlap between the 'militarized Swedish civil society', on the one hand, and the Swedish military as made up by civil society, on the other. Still, the army was of course not synonymous with civil society. While the perceived threat of nuclear war shaped the mentality of the military, it was organized to defend Swedish territory from invading forces. In this organization young men, during their mandatory service, were supposed to assume the role of a Swedish soldier, the 'citizen soldier'.

### *The model of the homeland defender*

Military role perception has been the focus of Norwegian political scientist Torunn Laugen Haaland, who has examined the changing role of the Norwegian armed forces since the 1990s.<sup>91</sup> The focus of her study is the transformation of the Norwegian armed forces and change of attitudes in relation to Norwegian participation in international combat operations. Haaland rightfully points out that the change in attitude is not solely present in civil and political society but must include change in the military doctrine, organization, structure, motivation and purpose, as well as pressing questions of purpose and risk-taking for the individual officers and soldiers.<sup>92</sup> Especially interesting in relation to the present study is Haaland's

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<sup>90</sup> For a historical survey on the Swedish conscript army, see Lars Ericson Wolke (1999).

<sup>91</sup> Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007). Haaland points out that the political will to act and use parts of the national military in UN- or NATO-led operations has seen significant change over the past 10–15 years. As an example of the change in attitude, she notes that the Norwegian involvement in the Gulf War in 1991 was limited to one Coastguard ship and a medical unit far from the actual fighting. This role of providing 'low-profile support units in peace operations' gradually changed to include the use of Special Forces and even fighterplanes in operations in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.

<sup>92</sup> Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007), pp. 2–4.

focus on the military institution, its self-image, and her theoretical approach in this field. Haaland labels the citizen soldiers *Homeland Defenders* when discussing military role perceptions as ideal types. The ideal type consists simply of 'citizens in arms' and relates to the defence of the nation. Even though classic warrior values like honour, duty, bravery and, perhaps above all, self-sacrifice, appeal to the Homeland Defenders, they are primarily motivated by the defence of the nation. Since all society's males are represented in the citizen-army, the core values could therefore be described as a reflection of the civil society it is ready to protect.<sup>93</sup> Haaland contrasts the ideal type of the Homeland Defender with those of the Warrior, the State Employee and the Mercenary. Generally speaking, the ideal types differ from each other in four respects: the overall purpose, the main emphasis, the core values, and in what way civilian control is achieved (see Table 1). While the overall purpose of the Homeland Defenders is the protection of the homeland, the purpose of the Warriors is to fight wars as professionals and uphold core values of honour, duty and loyalty. The purpose of the Mercenaries is of course to make a profit, as they act within organizations that resemble private, commercial companies. The ideal type of the State Employee in many aspects overlaps the Homeland Defender but also differs in some important ways. For the State Employee, socio-economic aspects drive the motivation rather than duty to defend the homeland. The ideal role model of State Employees is therefore to be viewed as simply employees of the state in the same way as any other civil servants. As such, they transcend the military–civilian divide that exists for the other ideal types.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 6–11.



Table 1. Ideal types of military roleperceptions.<sup>95</sup>

	Warrior	Homeland Defender	State Employee	Mercenary
<b>Overall purpose</b>	Fight wars	Protection of the homeland and nation-building	Implementation of political directives	Make a profit
<b>Main emphasis</b>	Professionalism	Representativeness and democracy	Effective management	Professionalism, Cost-effectiveness
<b>Core values</b>	Honour, duty, cohesion, loyalty	As similar to civil society as possible	Implementation of state policy/ workers' rights	Indifferent
<b>Civilian control achieved by</b>	Surveillance and obedience	Recruitment and education	Negotiations with unions	Market mechanisms and contracts

The Swedish soldiers of the ONUC all volunteered, and might therefore not completely fit the ideal type of the Homeland Defender. However, since all of them previously had served as conscripts, and since the battalions were organized within the structures of the regular forces, the pre-understanding that they at least initially bore a resemblance to the regular conscript forces is not far-fetched.

One might argue that the missing ideal type in Haaland's model is that of the Peacekeeper. She notes this but argues that the four above-discussed role perceptions are more fundamental in nature, since they focus on the relationship between the military and the home society. Peacekeeping, on the other hand, is to be viewed as a duty performed by parts of the national military rather than being a role model itself. Haaland also argues that the

<sup>95</sup> Based on Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007), p. 11.

four role perceptions are assumed to commonly exist within the armed forces while the perception of the peacekeeper does not.<sup>96</sup> Also Rubinstein argues that although soldiers perform the peacekeeping duty, it is something rather different than traditional perceptions of military work. In fact, and in line also with Whitworth's arguments above, it offers massive contradictions. Yet, according to Rubinstein, it is precisely those contradictions that form the core images of peacekeeping and gives it cultural legitimacy and authority (see Table 2.).<sup>97</sup>

Table 2. Core images of 'traditional military' and peacekeeping.<sup>98</sup>

<b>Traditional military: Business as usual</b>	<b>Peacekeeping: A world transformed</b>
No foreign troops on sovereign soil	Other countries' troops on sovereign soil
Separate from potential adversaries	Work with potential adversaries
Retain national command of troops	Command officer from other country
Stealth and surprise	Transparency of action
No contact with civilians	Intense interaction with civilians
Use of war-fighting skills	Use of negotiation and persuasion
Victory through force	Conflict management or resolution through pacific means

Thus, all Haaland's four ideal types rest within Rubinstein's notion of 'traditional military'. Haaland's model is useful as the starting point for a construction of a peacekeeping role model. Viewed, as in the case of Haaland's study, from an institutional level of national military self-perception, it can safely be assumed that the Norwegian armed forces would not perceive themselves as one large peacekeeping force. However, viewed from the perspective of the peacekeeping unit itself, it serves the purposes of

<sup>96</sup> Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007), p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 50.

<sup>98</sup> Based on Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 51.

this study to examine later on in what way one could suggest a peacekeeping self-perception ideal type by following Haaland's model.

### *The material*

The source material that will constitute the backbone of the military part of the study consists of the commanders' reports to the Defence Staff in Sweden,<sup>99</sup> and the internal field-newspaper *Djungeltelegrafen* (*The Jungle Telegraph*).

'Kongorapporter' (Congo reports) were monthly, classified reports sent by the battalion commander in the Congo to the Defence Staff and the Department of Foreign Affairs in Sweden. These reports included an overview of the situation in the Congo, the assignments of the Swedish battalion, the conditions experienced by the battalion, weather reports, and observations and remarks regarding the battalions' work in the Congo. It should be noted that while these reports were official documents sent up the chain of command, the Swedish battalion commander answered to the UN military command in Leopoldville, and not to the Swedish High Command in Stockholm.<sup>100</sup>

*Djungeltelegrafen* was the internal newspaper produced by the battalion and aiming to offer the soldiers entertainment and information. The newspaper had a circulation of about 250–300, was printed weekly, and was very popular and widely read among the soldiers.<sup>101</sup> It dealt with a wide spectrum of news: from articles on the history and languages of the Congo to jokes and sports results.

The Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* are two different types of material in the same context. The reports are mainly status reports dealing with questions of military organization and duties, estimations of the number of enemy troops and troop morale, and are written by the battalion commander in cooperation with his staff to his superiors in Sweden, and

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<sup>99</sup> The reports were also sent to the Army Staff, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the ONUC High Command.

<sup>100</sup> See Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 70.

<sup>101</sup> Kongorapport nr. 2, XK, 21/1/1961, p. 16.

also sent to his UN superiors in the Congo. *Djungeltelegrafen* also dealt with the situation and events in and around the battalion, but was in addition used as an instrument of entertainment, information and admonishments. Or, as *Djungeltelegrafen* put it: 'Our goal is to give pleasant and entertaining reading, give tips and information in an easy way, to amuse and create unity and teamspirit within our Congo Battalion.'<sup>102</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* was produced by the Battalion HQ and under the supervision of the press officer and battalion commander. The soldiers themselves wrote many articles and other contributions to the paper, but all such material was inspected before being printed. The Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* can therefore be said to be the words of the Battalion HQ in two different directions: the Congo reports 'up the chain of command' and *Djungeltelegrafen* 'down the chain of command'.<sup>103</sup>

It should be noted that the Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* fulfil completely different purposes. First of all, the Congo reports are just reports and contained few explanations for actions taken. It should be remembered that the Swedish battalions were not (nor was any other UN battalion in the Congo) placed under a national chain of command but under the UN Force Commander in Leopoldville, who in turn answered to the Secretary General's personal representative, the Secretary General, and in the end the

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<sup>102</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 1, XLIK, 16/6/1961, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> The Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* have been accessed from several places: the reports at both the archive of the Department of UN Affairs within the Army Staff (Arméstabens FN-avdelning) and the archives of the specific battalions, both found at the War Archive in Stockholm. Some of the Congo reports have also been collected from the Congo Archive at the Department of Foreign Affairs (HP48: Kongo). Furthermore, the electronic archives of *Folkebernadottesamlingarna* provide parts of the material from all these archives. Copies of *Djungeltelegrafen* have been examined at the battalions' archives at the War Archive, but also the University Library in Lund and Royal Library in Stockholm. While all the Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* have been found and read, not all of them have been used in this study. In order to limit the volume of the footnotes, the reports and papers are referred to by number, battalion and date. A complete list of archive references can be found in the Source Material section.

Security Council itself.<sup>104</sup> Also, the Congo reports, obviously, had no ambition to entertain.

The two types of material have certain limitations. First, they must be treated as having a tendency to glorify the Swedes, their performance and the cause. Given the political sensitivity of the mission there is, however, no likelihood of finding deliberate vilification of any of the other groups, at least not in the public *Djungeltelegrafen*. The material could, however, still describe other groups in a way that makes it possible for the researcher to interpret the texts in the light of the construction of the battalions' self-perception. Second, *Djungeltelegrafen* and the Congo reports must also in some way be considered as the 'words of the officers'. As such, they cannot relate the 'true' stories of the individual soldiers but rather the official picture as it was expressed within the battalion. The individual soldiers' identity constructions are not under examination here. Yet we should be aware that there still could have existed a collective soldier self-perception other than the one interpreted from *Djungeltelegrafen* and the Congo reports. This is most likely the case, and I would here add that it is solely the 'official' military story that is under scrutiny. Such an approach would still acknowledge the fact that there might be different collective identities present, but these fall outside of the scope of the study.

Besides the Congo reports and *Djungeltelegrafen*, various types of military material from the 'battalion archives' have been used to complement the picture. These include telegrams, some letters and a few pictures. In order to include the military institution in Sweden, and particularly the Army Staff, relevant official letters, evaluations and memorandums have been used from the archives of the Department of UN Affairs within the Army Staff.<sup>105</sup> Another source of information is the internal magazine *Arménytt* (Army News). This was written by representatives of the army and was aimed at all military personnel as well as parts of the army reserve. The paper offers an insight into the military institution's self-perception, as it among many things debated the role of the military in Swedish society. Also, it did on a number of occasions describe and reflect upon the events in the Congo.

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<sup>104</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 35.

<sup>105</sup> Swedish: Arméstabens FN-avdelning.

Sweden's three largest newspapers *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet*, represent the media node of analysis in this study. To use the media as a source for some sort of public discourse or opinion is not without methodological problems. Mikael Tossavainen argues that it actually might be impossible to determine to 'what extent the press imprints its opinions on the readers and to what extent the press is more of a reflection of the readers' opinion.'<sup>106</sup> One might argue, Tossavainen continues, that those who write newspaper articles and opinion pieces have a privileged position within the public discourse. While this certainly is the case it would be wrong to conclude that the readers therefore are mere recipients of opinions forced upon them. As noted by Smith earlier, the media albeit expressing a variety of different and sometimes also conflicting opinions, needs to follow and be in line with the shared codes of civil society in order to make sense.<sup>107</sup> Thus there exists a 'feedback-loop' between the press and the public.<sup>108</sup> In this sense, media scholar Douglas Kellner argues, 'media culture can be seen as a *contested terrain* reproducing on the cultural level the fundamental conflicts within society rather than as an instrument of domination.'<sup>109</sup> Hence, to view the media as equivalent to Clausewitz's notion of 'the people' is to over-emphasise its impact onto all levels of society.<sup>110</sup> Yet, to view the dominant news media as a group of powerful representatives of public discourse and opinion is valid. Defined as such, and as contrast to the military and the government, they fulfil a node in the trinitarian model.

*Svenska Dagbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet* can be said to represent large parts of the Swedish political spectrum, with *Svenska Dagbladet* as conservative, *Dagens Nyheter* as liberal and *Aftonbladet* as social democratic. Following the hypothesis that dramatic events create debates and sometimes 'friction' or 'disturbance', publication dates coinciding with dramatic episodes have been given the most attention and articles and editorials pertaining to these have been carefully read, while the content of these

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<sup>106</sup> Mikael Tossavainen (2006), p. 37.

<sup>107</sup> Philip Smith (2005), p. 13. Notably also in line with Thuén's citadel metaphor above.

<sup>108</sup> Mikael Tossavainen (2006), p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> Douglas Kellner (2001), pp. 101–102.

<sup>110</sup> In fact, Clausewitz's notion of 'the people' has been suggested to rather mean 'popular base', see Thomas Waldman (2009), p. 350.

newspapers during times of relative peace in the Congo has been less thoroughly examined. In addition to the three newspapers, other papers are included as a result of other actors commenting on them. In most cases this relates to comments by members of the Congo battalions, in the Congo reports or *Djungeltelegrafer*, as they react to particular articles published in Sweden.

Finally, the governmental node of the study has been searched for mainly in the public statements of government representatives. Naturally, the Congo issue was the matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and its responsible minister. For the period of 1960 to September 1962, this post was held by Östen Undén, a long-time member of the Social Democratic Party and the Swedish government. From September 1962, Torsten Nilsson, who also had been Minister of Defence in the 1950s, held the post. Alongside the public statements concerning the Congo matter, the Department of Foreign Affairs' 'Congo archives' have been used.

Public statements, such as parliamentary debates, radio speeches and press releases are tools of official communication. As such they in a sense conveyed the message from the state. Being public also meant they could be read by anyone and commented on by anyone and hence government officials and politicians needed to take into account the possible reactions from the media, the military and the international community. The internal communication within the Department of Foreign Affairs or between the Department and other government agencies had of course less such restrictions. As in the case of different kinds of military material or in the use of three major newspapers, the two types of government communication help to highlight possible 'disturbance' within the analytic node of the government.

### *Conclusion*

To present a contemporary story of the Swedish participation in the ONUC 1960–1964, this study uses the premise that such a story is constructed as a combination of three important nodes of analysis within a larger perception of Swedish society. Following Clausewitz's 'trinity of war', these nodes of analysis are composed of 'the people', 'the political leadership' and 'the general and his soldiers'. Here, the people are taken to mean public opinion

as represented by the printed media. 'The political leadership' refers to the Swedish government and its leading figures, while the content of the military nodes of analysis, or 'the general and his soldiers', is sought in documents from the Department of UN affairs within the Army Staff and, of course, from the Congo battalions themselves.

The study seeks a cultural understanding of how the different nodes of analysis presented and described Sweden's role as a peacekeeping nation in Africa, and more specifically as a fighting troop contributor to the UN mission in the Congo. The study is 'event-driven' in the sense that the actual combat incidents involving Swedish soldiers are given special attention. Experienced violence and reports about violence tended to bring the arguments of motives and purposes to the forefront on all nodes of analysis. This potentially challenged the civil-military-political consensus of motives, purposes and risk-taking.

A wide variety of sources are used, with the battalion field newspaper, *Djungeltelegrafen*, the monthly Congo reports, Swedish newspapers, and official statements by government representatives being the most prominent.





### 3. The United Nations in the Congo 1960–1964



Image 2. Map of the Congo 1960, in Colin Legum (ed.) (1961)

### *Darkest of pasts*

The following chapter serves as a short historical and political timeline of the UN involvement in the Congo crisis, 1960–1964. As such it addresses the key political and military events and their immediate consequences.

The Congo crisis did not spring out of thin air, but rather from a chain of events and heated arguments fuelled by close to a hundred years of Belgian oppression, first individually controlled by King Leopold II and from 1908 as a Belgian colony. And even before that, the Congo had been a resource pool for Arab and European slave traders. In his famous book *King Leopold's Ghost*, first published in 1998, Adam Hochschild has told the story of the European exploitation and tyranny in the Congo.<sup>111</sup> He notes that the Belgian government as late as the 1950s had no developed plan for 'guiding' the Congo to independence and hence was caught by surprise by the strong forces for decolonization. This meant that the Congo in 1960 was left with the task of building a future based on the darkest of pasts. Or, in Hochschild's words:

History lies heavy on Africa: the long decades of colonialism, several hundred years of Atlantic and Arab world slave trade, and – all too often ignored – countless centuries of indigenous slavery before that. From the colonial era, the major legacy Europe left to Africa was not democracy as it is practiced in England, France and Belgium; it was authoritarian rule and plunder. On the whole continent, perhaps no nation had a harder time than the Congo in emerging from the shadow of its past.<sup>112</sup>

For the purpose of this study, however, the story begins in 1960 with the independence and its immediate consequences.

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<sup>111</sup> Adam Hochschild (1999).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

### *The Congo crisis*

The process of decolonization resulted in sixteen new African UN members in 1960; among them the Congo, which had won its independence from Belgium earlier that year. Before the independence, it had become apparent that the country suffered from political instability. Riots in Leopoldville in 1959 forced the Belgian government, in early 1960, to hastily initiate a Round Table Conference in Brussels on the subject of Congolese independence. The Congolese delegates, even though representing different political factions, had few problems in uniting behind the demand for absolute and immediate freedom from Belgian rule. The Belgian administration in the Congo had by this time lost much of its former control and authority in the colony. The Belgian government came to the conclusion that order could only be reinstated by the use of force, which could easily develop into full-scale war. The Congolese demand for independence was instead met, the date for independence set for 30 June 1960, and a constitution was drafted.<sup>113</sup>

A number of political parties and factions placed demands on the future of the new state. One of the areas of heated debate, which was left unsolved, was the question of the level of political autonomy for the different provinces in the Congo. In May 1960, shortly before the date set for independence, the first elections were held. The results turned out to be a relative victory for the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) and its charismatic leader Patrice Lumumba. The MNC represented the nationalistic movement, with an outspoken goal of creating *one* nation with a unitary state structure. However, the MNC and Lumumba were not in a position to, by themselves, control the new government but needed political allies. A suggestion, introduced by the Belgian representatives, was presented to Joseph Kasavubu, leader of the *Alliance des Ba-Kongo* (ABAKO); one entailing the construction of a coalition against the MNC consisting of all the other parties. The coalition failed to reach agreement and a compromise solution was agreed upon, by which Kasavubu was appointed president and Lumumba put in charge of the government formation. The ABAKO was a party based on ethnic and regional affinities and which therefore had a

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<sup>113</sup> Karl Birnbaum & Åke Sparring (1961), pp. 21–33; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 5–6.

federalist standpoint, with substantial province autonomy as a political goal. This made the Lumumba–Kasavubu coalition weak from the outset. The real separatist threat, however, did not come from the ABAKO but from the southern province of Katanga and its leader Moïse Tshombe.<sup>114</sup>

Katanga was the wealthiest of the Congo provinces, holding more than half of the Congo's invested capital. It contributed almost half of the entire state's income and stood for half of the Congo's exports. Already during Belgian rule, Tshombe and his party had spoken of an independent Katanga. In Katanga the mistrust in Lumumba's idea of a strong central government was apparent. During the 1960 elections, the MNC had not been given a single representative in the Katangan provincial government.<sup>115</sup>

Independence also generated substantial emigration of white Europeans from the Congo, mainly Belgians fearing for their security in the new state. This added to the instability of the country, since the Europeans made up almost all of the skilled labour force there. Lumumba realized this and had urged the Belgian administrators, doctors, technicians and officers to stay in the Congo after independence. Some did, among them most of the officers of the national army, the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC). However, the ANC soldiers were not satisfied with the decision to leave the army unmodified after independence. The demand for an 'Africanization' of the officers' corps led to disturbances. The Belgian government responded to the concerns of Belgians by strengthening the Belgian military presence in the Congo, which only aggravated the situation further. A large-scale mutiny by the native soldiers against their Belgian officers began on 4 July in Leopoldville and spread throughout the country during the following days. European civilians were attacked and in just a couple of days panic had spread among the Europeans, who in vast numbers fled the Congo. On 9 July the mutiny had reached Elizabethville, the capital of Katanga, and the next morning Belgian troops intervened to restore order in the city. By agreement, Belgian troops were not allowed to intervene without express permission from the Congo government. No such permission had been given. The Belgian troops had acted on Tshombe's demand. The next day

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<sup>114</sup> Karl Birnbaum & Åke Sparring (1961), pp. 32–34; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 6–7.

<sup>115</sup> Karl Birnbaum & Åke Sparring (1961), pp. 32, 44.

Tshombe declared Katanga's independence from the Congo, expressed the wish for an economic union with Belgium, and refused to meet with Lumumba. This came as a devastating blow to the Lumumba–Belgian relations and left Lumumba with no trust in the former colonial power. With a country well on its way to civil war, Lumumba and Kasavubu turned to the United Nations on 12 July.<sup>116</sup>

### *The creation of the ONUC*

The UN Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, had already in January 1960 offered technical assistance to the Congo, and during the crisis build-up in the Congo further UN offers of assistance were made. When the Congolese government sent a formal request for UN military intervention, Hammarskjöld was prepared and acted rapidly. The next day he assembled the Security Council, and the same evening it adopted Resolution 143, which empowered the Secretary General 'to make the necessary steps, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Congo, to provide the Government with such military assistance as may be necessary'.<sup>117</sup> The Resolution also called on Belgium to withdraw all its troops from the Congo.

In less than two days from the Congolese request for UN assistance, the first Tunisian UN troops arrived in Leopoldville, and in the following days UN troops from Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea and Morocco arrived in the city. The newly appointed UN Force Commander in Congo, Swedish Carl C. von Horn, immediately deployed the troops in several Congolese cities, however not in the Katanga province, where Tshombe refused a UN presence.<sup>118</sup> During the second half of July all Belgian troops withdraw back to their bases, leaving the UN troops in charge of the cities, except Katanga, where the Belgian troops remained. Hammarskjöld and his staff now found themselves in a dilemma. In Leopoldville, Lumumba and the Congolese government demanded a UN/ANC intervention in Katanga to get rid of

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 35–43, 52–54.

<sup>117</sup> *The Blue Helmets. A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping* (1996), pp. 176–177; S/4387, UN Security Council Resolution 143, July 14, 1960.

<sup>118</sup> *The Blue Helmets* (1996), pp. 178–179; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 28.

Tshombe and his secession government. At the same time Tshombe and his Belgian associates, in Elizabethville, refused to accept UN troops in what they perceived as an independent Katanga. With skilful diplomatic manoeuvres, Hammarskjöld managed to balance the wills of Lumumba, Kasavubu, Tshombe, the Belgians and the Security Council in a way that finally convinced Tshombe to accept UN troops in Katanga and the Belgian withdrawal. A new Security Council Resolution also put pressure on the Belgian government to comply with UN demands.<sup>119</sup>

On 12 August, Hammarskjöld and one company from the newly arrived 8th Swedish Battalion landed in Elizabethville and met with Tshombe. Final agreements were made, and over the following days the UN entered Katanga with Swedish and Irish contingents.<sup>120</sup>

### *The Congo crisis and the Cold War*

The Congo crisis almost immediately became incorporated in the Cold War struggle. In one of his first speeches after independence, Lumumba declared that in order for the Congo to become truly free, the country needed to become economically independent from Europe. Naturally, this was not a profitable scenario for states like Belgium, France and the US, which had vast investments in the raw material industry in the Congo.<sup>121</sup> Lumumba's anti-West rhetoric was also combined with good oratory skills and charisma, in a way that made him dangerous in the eyes of Brussels, Paris and Washington. Dismissed by the Western states, Lumumba instead turned to

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<sup>119</sup> For a description of the diplomatic negotiations in the case of Katanga, see Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 28–53. In September 1960, Kasavubu, with assistance from the ANC, dismissed and arrested Lumumba. He was later handed over to Tshombe in January 1961 and murdered. Lars Ericson Wolke (2007), p. 41; S/4426, UN Security Council Resolution 146, 9 August 1960.

<sup>120</sup> The fact that only white UN troops entered Katanga in the early phase is notable. One of Tshombe's conditions for accepting UN troops was that none of them came from communist-orientated countries, among which he had Ghana and Guinea in mind. Lumumba objected to the fact that no African states were represented among the UN troops in Katanga. Later, Moroccan, Ethiopian and Indian troops also operated in Katanga. Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p.36; Robert C.R. Siekmann (1991), p. 72.

<sup>121</sup> Adam Hochschild (1999), pp. 301–302.

the Soviet Union in order to gain political and economic backing for his agenda. The Soviets replied positively and Soviet technicians, in the words of the CIA's Chief of Station in the Congo, started to 'pour' into the country.<sup>122</sup>

The continuing Soviet assistance to the Congo caused great unease among US officials but also the UN. Hammarskjöld addressed the problem of Soviet direct aid to the Congo by noting that it was against the spirit of the UN Resolution. The Soviet representative to the UN, Valerian Zorin, replied that the aid, contrary to the 'support given by some States to forces opposing the lawful Government of the Congo ... was directed to the elected representatives of the state.'<sup>123</sup> The assistance from Moscow had been a result of Lumumba's initiative and further added to the tension between him and Kasavubu. In September 1960 the coalition between the two broke down and they declared each other removed from office. In the political chaos that followed, the young colonel Joseph Mobutu staged a *coup d'état* after being assured that he would receive US approval afterwards.<sup>124</sup> Naturally this suited the American administration, which had had the goal of removing Lumumba from power. Mobuto was an anti-communist and established a long-lasting friendship with several American administrations.<sup>125</sup> Lumumba was imprisoned and later murdered, while Kasavubu, after pressure from the Americans, was reinstated. Also, Mobuto expelled all Russian technicians and other personnel. In an instant the Russians seemed to have lost the political Cold War battle in the Congo, and Soviet representatives to the UN were furious when the organization met in September 1960, demanding Hammarskjöld's resignation. The UN intervention in Katanga lessened the Eastern Bloc's criticism of the UN somewhat, since Thsombe was perceived as anti-communist, but the Soviets remained sceptical throughout the duration of the mission.

To argue that foreign agents completely controlled the political process during the Congo crisis would be misleading. Former CIA operative Larry

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<sup>122</sup> Larry Devlin (2007), p. 77.

<sup>123</sup> In Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 55.

<sup>124</sup> Larry Devlin (2007), pp. 76–80.

<sup>125</sup> Adam Hochschild (1999), pp. 302–303.



Devlin bears witness to how Congolese leaders, especially Mobuto, took the initiative to meet with the CIA. For the CIA it was all about reacting to the events rather than controlling them. While Cold War spies were involved, they did not control the events. Nevertheless, the actors in the Congo crisis, its leaders and their visions, became thought of, as being connected to one side or the other in the Cold War struggle. They were also explicitly accused of it. For the UN and the ONUC, the clear link to the Cold War primarily meant two things. First, it contributed to the accusation that the UN was partial in the ideological struggle, regardless of what motives the UN itself considered to have for action. Every action the UN took in the Congo could be argued to be in favour of one or another external power. This also meant that the UN administration had to face sharp international criticism from someone, regardless of what they did. Secondly, and therefore, in the media the Congo crisis became interpreted through the Cold War logic in a way that effectively made it a world problem rather than a Congolese problem. This in turn meant that the solution to the crisis had to be an internationally acceptable one that guaranteed a stable Congolese state which would not constitute a threat to world peace. In other words: a solution not necessarily meaning stability and prosperity for the Congolese people.

### *The war in Katanga*

The 1960 Congolese political landscape was complex and heated, and UN troops were deployed in many parts of the country. For the sake of this study of the Swedish battalions, the focus will be on the Katanga province and its capital Elizabethville (now Lubumbashi). Therefore, a short chronological summary of the events in Katanga is presented below.

Dag Hammarskjöld negotiated the first entry into Katanga in August 1960, and by mid-November the first Swedish 'Congo Battalion' (10th) had installed itself in Elizabethville.<sup>126</sup> The Katangan secession from the Congo Republic had created a dangerous situation. In the northern parts of the province, the Baluba tribe had revolted against Thsombe, which had spurred

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<sup>126</sup> The temporarily transferred 8th Gaza Battalion had first entered in August and prepared for the arrival of the 10th Congo Battalion. Nils Sköld (1994), p. 73.

bitter fighting between them and the newly created Katangan armed forces, the *gendarmérie*. The *gendarmérie* was well-equipped, possessed vehicles, heavy weapons, aircraft, and employed large numbers of European mercenaries.<sup>127</sup> The UN mission was to patrol Katanga and oversee the withdrawal of Belgian troops and mercenaries in Katangan service, as was stipulated in the Security Council's Resolution of 21 February.<sup>128</sup> Instead, the UN became trapped in a provincial civil war between Lumumba-loyal elements in Katanga, mainly the Baluba tribe, and the Katangan provincial army, the *gendarmérie*, something which on several occasions led to UN troops fighting defensively. Ethiopian UN troops repelled a *gendarmérie* attack on the city of Kabolo in northern Katanga in the beginning of April, capturing 30 mercenaries in the process. On 8 November in Niemba, northern Katanga, Baluba killed eleven Irish soldiers in an ambush, and on 25 November, near Pweto Baluba, killed one Moroccan soldier.<sup>129</sup> The so-called 'Baluba problem' was also very much a reality for the Swedish contingent in their work of escorting supply and refugee trains. On a couple of occasions the troops opened fire on Baluba who tried to prevent the supply trains from reaching their destinations. The Swedish relations with the Baluba tribe will be discussed in further detail below.

The Katangan civil war also created great numbers of Baluba refugees, many of whom sought protection at the Swedish camp in Elizabethville. By 1961 a large refugee camp just outside the Swedish site had been erected, populated by some 40,000–50,000, mostly Baluba. It fell on the Swedish battalion to administer the camp.<sup>130</sup>

One important step needed to fulfil the Security Council Resolution was to round up and disarm the mercenaries and foreign officers serving with the Katangan forces and government. By August 1961 diplomatic measures to achieve this had been exhausted, and on 23 August the Katangan government recalled its representatives from the central government in

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<sup>127</sup> Sköld estimates the number of *gendarmérie* as approximately 3,000 in southern Katanga and another 4,000–5,000 in the northern parts. Among these were about 500 mercenaries, mostly officers. Nils Sköld (1994), p. 98.

<sup>128</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 124.

<sup>129</sup> Kongorapport nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, p. 1, app. II, p. 1; Abi-Saab, pp. 125–126.

<sup>130</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 119.

Leopoldville. In addition, a renewed intensity in the harassment of the over 50,000 Baluba inhabitants in Elizabethville continued to draw large numbers of refugees to the camp. The UN was under pressure to take action. It feared that the failure to solve the Katangan question could easily lead to an ANC intervention in Katanga, which most certainly would have started a nationwide civil war. On 28 August, one last request to Tshombe to cooperate was made. This was immediately turned down and two days later the UN went on the offensive in Operation Rumpunch.<sup>131</sup>

The military operation met little resistance as key sites in Elizabethville were secured. At most places the gendarmerie surrendered without opposition when facing fully armed UN troops. Among the sites taken by the UN was the gendarmerie HQ in Elizabethville. Around midday, all UN units returned to their camps as negotiations with Tshombe had been resumed. In all about 100 mercenaries were arrested in Operation Rumpunch.<sup>132</sup>

However, the operation was far from a complete success, as many mercenaries had avoided arrest and the refugee problem continued to grow. Moreover, Radio Katanga began to broadcast intense 'hate propaganda' against the UN, among other things claiming that UN troops had raped women and plundered houses in Elizabethville. Anti-UN demonstrations, most probably orchestrated by the Katangan Ministry of the Interior, were arranged and people took to the streets, throwing rocks at the UN soldiers.<sup>133</sup> The situation led to a renewed threat of an all-out ANC intervention in September 1961. Seeing no alternative, the UN civilian administration ordered UN troops into action again, on 13 September, to finish the job started in Operation Rumpunch. The new operation was given the name Morthor. This time, however, the gendarmerie was better prepared.<sup>134</sup>

By using the same tactics and concentrating on the same targets as last time, the UN made it easy for the gendarmerie and their mercenaries to predict

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<sup>131</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 128–129; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 99–100; Kongorapport nr. 2, XIIK, 31/7/1961, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 129; Kongorapport nr. 2, XIIK, 31/7/1961, pp. 7–8.

<sup>133</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien (1962), p. 244; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 132–133.

<sup>134</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 100–101; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 133.

the UN course of action. Believing that the UN was about to disarm the gendarmerie and end the Katangan secession, the soldiers of the gendarmerie this time fought back. Despite fierce fighting in several places in Elizabethville, Irish, Indian and Swedish UN troops were unable to complete all of their mission objectives. Instead, the same night and over the following days, the situation escalated into war in and around Elizabethville and nearby Jadotville. Both sides suffered casualties (Swedes, Irish, Indians serving the UN, and the gendarmerie, including their mercenaries) and also among the dead and wounded were civilians. The fighting included the use of heavy military equipment such as machine guns, mortars, armoured cars and even a Katangan fighter aircraft. The most intense fighting occurred in Elizabethville between 13 and 15 September, but continued sporadically until 21 September when a ceasefire was agreed upon.<sup>135</sup> Acting on a UN request, Sweden completed its commitment by sending five fighterplanes to Katanga.<sup>136</sup>

Operation Morthor had meant nothing in terms of forwarding a political solution to the Katanga problem. By the early days of December 1961 the UN believed that the gendarmerie were building up for a military offensive. They had erected roadblocks in central Elizabethville, and on 5 December fighting broke out as UN troops removed them. Over the following days the UN air force won air superiority by destroying Katangan fighter planes on the ground while reinforcements joined the UN troops in Elizabethville. On 14 December the UN units went on the offensive in Operation Unokat, and after heavy fighting the gendarmerie resistance was broken on 16 December as their headquarters, Camp Massart, were taken by Swedish troops.<sup>137</sup> The 'December War', as it later was referred to, was the most dramatic event for the Swedish Congo mission. The Congo Report of 31 December 1961 concluded: 3 killed in action, 18 wounded, and 21 cases of 'mental disorder including shock'.<sup>138</sup> After the 'December War' the Swedish battalion was transferred to Kamina in central Katanga.

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<sup>135</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 140; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 100 – 101; Kongorapport nr. 4, XLIK, 30/9/1961, pp. 10–17.

<sup>136</sup> Lars Ericson Wolke (2007), p. 60.

<sup>137</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 104; Lars Ericson Wolke (2007), pp. 60–61.

<sup>138</sup> Kongorapport nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, p. 17.

After Unokat, a time of relative peace followed in Katanga as negotiations were resumed and Tshombe agreed to treat the Congo as one nation with Kasavubu as its president. However, the Katanga secession was not over and large numbers of refugees still needed UN protection. In July 1962 the celebration of Katanga's Independence Day intensified the situation once again. The final 'showdown' came in December 1962 when the Katangan gendarmerie and UN units once more opened fire on each other in Elizabethville. In a joint offensive throughout Katanga, UN forces occupied all cities in an operation that met little resistance. The Swedes, now operating from Kamina in central Katanga, took the city of Kaminaville, facing little obstruction. Tshombe fled to Rhodesia and the gendarmerie was dissolved. This meant the end of the Katangan secession, and Tshombe, in exchange for amnesty, granted the UN full mobility in Katanga and resigned as head of the Katangan government. The ANC fully entered Katanga in 1963 and together with UN troops disarmed the final remains of the gendarmerie in northern Katanga. Large parts of the gendarmerie were also integrated into the ANC. By mid-May 1964 the last Swedish troops (of the 22nd Battalion) left Katanga, and on 30 June the final UN troops left the Congo.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 185–192; Lars Ericson Wolke (2007), pp. 69–73; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 105–108.

## 4. Swedish decision-making and preparations before the ONUC

Before heading into the Congo events of 1960–1964, it is necessary to examine the preconditions in which the Swedish battalions were formed. The overall international and Congolese political preconditions, decisions and events leading up to the UN decision to intervene in the Congo in 1960 were discussed in Chapter 3. The present chapter further elaborates on the Swedish positions and preconditions before and during the first month of the Congo mission. The focus here is twofold. One aim is to examine the decision to transfer the 8th Battalion from Gaza to the Congo in response to an official request by the Secretary General on 17 July 1960, and the decision to expand the mission by setting up the first ‘Congo battalion’ (the 10th Battalion) as a response to the UN request of 23 September 1960. Another aim is to see in what context the battalions were formed, how they were structured and what was expected of them. Unlike the main study in the following chapters, which centres on the Swedish battalions in the Congo, this chapter seeks to analyse the Swedish context during the initial phase of the ONUC, and hence can be seen as a background chapter, yet an empirical one.

In this chapter the decision to become militarily involved in the ONUC will be looked at on several analytic levels, including the political, public and military. What were the motives for participation? What could those motives be said to be founded on? What was expected of the mission and in which ways were preparations made?

First and foremost, it was a political decision. The UN had (and has) no powers to order any member state to participate in peacekeeping missions. These must be voluntary actions. This meant that the overall responsibility was placed on the social democratic party under the leadership of Tage

Erlander, the prime minister, and Östen Undén, the minister of foreign affairs. On the political level, the use of Swedish troops abroad benefited from a broad political consensus. It also benefited from public support for this measure. As we shall see, this decision in 1960 fitted well into the agenda of Swedish foreign policy and UN participation at the time.

In an attempt to capture the views of the public at this time, Sweden's three major daily newspapers, *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, have been studied. The strong public support for Swedish participation could be found in each of them, thus making the political decision a relatively easy one.

On a military level it was a decision of the Swedish army in particular. Of course, its representatives had no possibility of refusing to deploy once the political decision had been made, but were left with the task of forming, training, and equipping the Swedish battalions that were to serve in the Congo. Sweden, unlike many of the other participating UN members, had a conscript army in which all male citizens over the age of 18 had to serve for a period. In other words, all Swedish soldiers were also civilian citizens. With the exception of a few professional officers, the Swedish ONUC battalions, therefore, were recruited from this 'army of citizens'. The soldiers were expected to possess some military skills, but applications were accepted from all who had completed their national service and had thereafter volunteered for further duty.

#### *Swedish active foreign policy, the United Nations and anti-colonialism*

Examining the political level of the decision to participate in ONUC naturally entails a focus on Swedish foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. The domestic arena is by no means uninteresting as a way to view the reception of the decision by the media, but the political action can hardly be said to have been forced by domestic considerations, at least not in the initial phase of the ONUC. Summarizing the ten-year research project on Swedish foreign policy during the Cold War, in *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred* (2008), Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson and Karl Molin draw the

political landscape of the country throughout this era.<sup>140</sup> By having avoided military involvement during the Second World War, Swedish confidence in neutrality as the foundation for foreign policy grew from the 1950s to become dominant throughout the Cold War era. Neutrality, however, by no means meant that Sweden was passive in world affairs. The Swedish position as upholding non-alignment in peacetime, referring to neutrality in wartime was, unlike in the case of Switzerland or Austria, not dictated by national law or formally recognized by other states.<sup>141</sup> As pointed out by Bjereld et al., the term neutrality refers to a state's declaration *in* wartime, and was in the Swedish case clearly related to the potential 'hot war' between West and East.<sup>142</sup> This left non-aligned Sweden with the ability to actively take part in international politics as well as the possibility to take sides in conflicts in the event of a political majority for such an action. Within this context the United Nations became a perfect forum for Swedish international politics, and with little political opposition Sweden applied for and was granted membership in 1946.

From the 1950s (and up to the mid-1980s) the number of UN member states steadily increased as a consequence of decolonization. Many of the former colonies were weak states. For some of them, their newly won independence was followed by internal violence. The UN offered a platform for the new countries to make themselves heard, as well as for Sweden to be involved in questions concerning the so-called Third World.<sup>143</sup> The Swedish Foreign Declaration of 1956 emphasized the former colonies' right to self-determination and expressed Sweden's intention to aid those countries through its work in the United Nations. In the same declaration, Östen Undén concluded that colonialism and all its manifestations should be condemned.<sup>144</sup> Research on Swedish foreign policy confirms a gradual change towards a more active involvement in world affairs from the late 1950s and through the 1960s. This change was clearly, although not exclusively, related to the decolonization process that altered the

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<sup>140</sup> Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson & Karl Molin, (2008).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>142</sup> Bo Hultdt (1974), pp. 26 – 27.

<sup>143</sup> Ulf Bjereld, Alf W. Johansson & Karl Molin (2008), pp. 206 – 207.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 206.



international system. The new states expressed their concerns through the United Nations, which in turn forced Swedish policymakers to mediate in the debates between the former colonies and their former administrative powers. Hultdt has shown that Sweden, in these debates, took a clear stand for the former colonies, arguing their rights in the UN and sometimes even expressing strong criticism against the Western colonial powers. This line of argumentation from the Swedish government corresponded well with both the idealistic and realistic goals of Swedish foreign policy. The idealistic standpoint of speaking up against oppression was, according to Hultdt, often demanded by Swedish public opinion, and especially during the 1960s conspicuous in regard to the South African apartheid regime.<sup>145</sup> The early 1960s also saw the beginning of organized Swedish foreign aid aimed at helping development programmes in the 'Third World'.<sup>146</sup> However, the 'active foreign policy' of criticizing colonialism also filled goals of national self-interest. By actively arguing for peoples' rights to self-determination and democracy for other non-aligned states, as well as criticizing oppression and violence, Swedish neutrality politics were taken seriously. It assured, as Prime Minister Tage Erlander put it in 1968, 'a greater respect for our neutrality.'<sup>147</sup> This was in turn considered crucial for the possibility to keep Sweden out of a potential war in Europe, and hence a matter of national security.

### *The Congo question, political decisions and public opinion*

The Congo crisis, followed by the UN intervention, became a testing ground for the emerging 'active foreign policy'. It was not the first time Sweden had embarked on international peacekeeping or sent citizens to serve the organization in other capacities. The Congo mission, unlike its predecessors, however, would evolve to become much more politically complex and sensitive, while conditions in the field deteriorated, resulting in violence and local warfare. Sweden had already been involved in observer missions to the Middle East, Kashmir and Lebanon, and participated with a

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<sup>145</sup> Bo Hultdt (1974), p. 33.

<sup>146</sup> Torbjörn Nilsson (2009), pp. 82–83.

<sup>147</sup> Prime Minister speech 1968, in Bo Hultdt (1974), p. 27.

field hospital and later also observers in Korea. The major operation in the 1950s, however, was during the Suez Crisis. Since 1956 Swedish UN troops, as part of the UNEF (United Nations Emergency Force), had been dispatched to Egypt, tasked with guarding the armistice between Egyptian and Israeli/French/British forces. In the summer of 1960, when political instability caused the situation in the Congo to become uncontrollable, the 8th Swedish Battalion of the UNEF was stationed in Gaza.<sup>148</sup> Swedish soldiers were already in the service of the UN at the time, and this made it easier for Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld to request that those troops should be transferred to the Congo, where they would be of much more value to the organization. The official request to the Swedish government was made on 17 July, and two days later the main part of the 8th Battalion was on the move.

Sofia Ekfeldt Nyman has, in a short work, examined the motives for Swedish military participation in the Congo. Her stated purpose was to compare the official motives expressed in speeches with unofficial motives, such as those found in confidential memoranda. Her source material is limited and can hardly be said to capture 'public opinion'. The unofficial correspondence, however, indicates that there were, in the initial phase of the operation, few contradictions or 'hidden agendas' between the official rhetoric and the internal discussions.<sup>149</sup>

The decision to 'lend' the Swedish Gaza contingent for service in the Congo engendered no opposition from 'official' Sweden. On the morning of 18 July, the Foreign Committee met for one hour to discuss the request of the United Nations. The group, with representatives from all political parties in the *Riksdag*, agreed to allow the Swedish Gaza battalion to be used in the Congo. The Swedish terms for this were simple. The soldiers would be placed under UN command, they were to be used as a 'police force', not taking any active part in the internal affairs of the Congo, and all Swedish soldiers sent there would be volunteers. Undén wrote in his diary: 'In the Foreign Committee, ... no hesitation.'<sup>150</sup> Later the same day he spoke on

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<sup>148</sup> For a military history of the Gaza battalions, see Nils Sköld (1990).

<sup>149</sup> Sofia Ekfeldt Nyman (1999).

<sup>150</sup> Karl Molin (ed.) (2002), p. 617.

national radio, spelling out several important standpoints of 'official Sweden'.

After a quick investigation, the government has reached the conclusion that Hammarskjöld's request can be met. The Foreign Committee has been consulted and the formal decision will be taken in a cabinet meeting tomorrow. The selection of officers and men will be built on voluntary commitment. It is a job that demands great responsibility given to the Swedish troops, but we do not doubt that they, with honour, will complete the task as they have done with the task in the Gaza area. To be specific about the implication of the mission is not easy. The intention is not that the unit will participate in combat or act in favour of any political agenda or interfere with internal affairs. ... [I]t is armed with light weapons ..., but not for fighting war. ... Its stay in the Congo is decided after a request by the country's government and in accordance with a resolution endorsed by both the USA and the Soviet Union. It should be a guarantee for that the presence of the unit would not be misunderstood. During its service the unit answers to the Secretary General.

The Swedish government authorities have on several occasions earlier shown willingness to complete missions in the service of the UN. Our country's position as a neutral state can sometimes make it easier to participate in international contexts .... It is also our duty, as neutrals, to undertake obligations in the interest of peaceful cooperation and understanding.<sup>151</sup>

First of all, Undén assured listeners that the decision had been made with agreement from the political opposition, through the Foreign Committee. Consulting with the Foreign Committee on questions concerning sending Swedish soldiers abroad was (and still is) common practice, but it also created a broad agreement among all political parties about the actions taken. This was also a way to assure that the king was behind the decision, as

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<sup>151</sup> 'Anförande av utrikesministern i Dagens Eko den 18 juli', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1960*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1961), p. 75–76.

he was a member of the Committee. While the Committee itself was not the deciding body, a unanimous agreement had nevertheless been easily reached.

Undén continued by acknowledging that the specifics about the mission were difficult to assess. The situation in the Congo, one well covered by Swedish media, was both complex and violent. The Swedish government was well aware of the potential dangers in sending troops to the Congo. While pointing out that the *intention* was not for the troops to be involved in combat or to interfere in other ways in internal affairs, Undén still did not rule out such a scenario. The burden of responsibility for the use of Swedish soldiers was instead explicitly placed on the UN and its Secretary General.

It was also important to clearly show that the action in the Congo was both legal and internationally supported. Sweden acted on a request not only from the UN, but also from the Congolese government itself. Likewise, the mission was backed by a Security Council resolution endorsed by both the USA and the Soviet Union. The Swedish participation could therefore not be misinterpreted as being in or against any specific interest of either of them. This was of course vital, since the mission could be argued to be in line with Swedish neutrality politics and Swedish foreign policy in general. Finally, Undén underlined that Sweden was well-suited for the job. The neutrality policy, when internationally recognized, worked well in situations of mediating and policing. This, in combination with a resourceful military with former peacekeeping experience, made Sweden well-qualified for UN peacekeeping service. Taking all these things into consideration, it was Sweden's *duty*, the foreign minister concluded.

### *Media responses*

Public opinion in 1960 is somewhat hard to capture. The Swedish public, however, could hardly have been unaware of what was happening in the Congo. In 1959 the daily press had a circulation of almost 4,800,000, which made Swedes one of the most newspaper-reading people in the world.<sup>152</sup> A survey of 8 November 1960 concluded that 99% of the population knew

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<sup>152</sup> Karl Erik Gustafsson & Per Rydén (2002), p. 137.

about the events in the Congo.<sup>153</sup> Like the politicians, the Swedish press reacted by emphasizing duty and international responsibility. The events in the Congo, and the related debates in the UN, had since independence more or less dominated the foreign news pages of all larger newspapers. *Svenska Dagbladet*, on the political right, commented on the decision the day after Undén's radio speech. Understanding the severity of the Congo situation in the summer of 1960, the paper called the decision 'serious' and 'ominous' when referring to the many dangers that awaited the soldiers.

The technical and climatological adventurousness that awaits Swedish troops in a foreign country like the Congo, should not be overlooked, still they appear insignificant compared to uncertainty and risk factors of [a] political and military nature that almost with one-hundred per cent certainty can be predicted.<sup>154</sup>

Still, it was the right decision to make and the right thing to do, according to *Svenska Dagbladet*. The extreme sensitivity in regard to international politics in the Congo drama made it necessary for the UN to make use of neutral member states in its peacekeeping mission. As such, Sweden should be honoured to be asked to commit to such an important, yet difficult assignment, the article further argued. It was a duty. The motives, as *Svenska Dagbladet* viewed them, were twofold. The purpose of guaranteeing the peace, and thereby the security of all people of the Congo, was in itself worth the risk. Above and beyond the noble cause of such humanitarian assistance to the Congo, however, stood the possibility and desire to strengthen the authority of the UN.

A UN success [in the Congo] promises not only to give stability to the immense transformation process sweeping over Africa and endorse the possibility to control a nationalism that through its newly

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<sup>153</sup> 'Ungdomarna snål på överbetyg åt FN:s uppträdande i Kongo', SIFO, 8/11/1960.

<sup>154</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/7/1960. Similar conclusions are found in *Dagens Nyheter*, 21/7/1960.

awakened indomitableness works against its own purpose. Repercussions can reach far beyond the African continent. The intervention in the Congo is, for the UN, an unprecedented tour de force. If the organization can stand this test, it will bring far more authority into its work of strengthening peace and security in the world.<sup>155</sup>

Not surprisingly, almost exactly the same viewpoint could be found in newspapers on the political left. *Aftonbladet*, like *Svenska Dagbladet*, predicted 'military and political complications', but gave its support to the government's decision, concluding that it was an 'honourable' task that was in harmony with the neutrality policy.<sup>156</sup>

Soon it became clear that the Congo situation was not going to be resolved by the time the contracts for the Gaza battalion expired. Initially the UN had requested the 8th Battalion to stay for one month in the Congo, until mid-August 1960, but the situation there called for the Secretary General to ask that the battalion stay for the entire duration of their original UNEF contract, which meant until mid-November. After another round of volunteering, most of the battalion (518 soldiers) chose to stay, and the rest left for Gaza on 17 August.<sup>157</sup> The 8th Battalion was originally stationed in the capital, Leopoldville, but was subsequently transferred to the separatist province of Katanga and its capital Elizabethville in August. Its length of service was demanding, but could be labelled 'police work' or 'active peacekeeping'. The battalion guarded airfields as well as other important sites, and patrolled the streets of Leopoldville and later Elizabethville. During its stay, political tension increased and Tshombe and his government made hostile statements directed against the UN and its Secretary General. The 8th Battalion was replaced by the 10th Battalion in November 1960.

The decision to continue the involvement in the ONUC was made by the government on 23 September. It generated little opposition from the media.

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<sup>155</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/7/1960.

<sup>156</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 19/7/1960.

<sup>157</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 53.

*Svenska Dagbladet* simply noted that this was the only possible action to take without completely betraying the UN and the people of the Congo. The paper repeated its earlier statement about the dangers in the Congo and praised the soldiers' contribution. '[T]he dice have been thrown', and to disengage now would mean chaos in the Congo, it stated, further assuring readers that they should be thankful no Swede had been killed or wounded, that this was only the beginning, and the situation would probably deteriorate.<sup>158</sup> Voices against Swedish involvement were at the time few in the media. By November *Svenska Dagbladet* had slightly modified its position by pointing out that Swedish authorities needed to closely follow developments in the Congo and reserve the right to reconsider the Swedish involvement.<sup>159</sup> In a letter to the editor of *Aftonbladet*, a reader argued that the Swedish troops might be caught on a Cold War battlefield in the Congo and should therefore be removed.<sup>160</sup> Instead, the reader maintained, other – non-military – forms of aid should be provided to the Congolese. The earlier referred to SIFO survey (in November 1960) showed, however, that the public generally had great confidence in the UN's work in the Congo. The organization received a positive assessment from 88% of respondents; 79% 'Pass with Praise' or better and around 50% the top grade 'Commendable'. Only 1% gave the grade 'Failure'. Three out of four thought the Swedish military in the Congo behaved better than the Congo-born Belgians, and 70% that the events taking place there were a threat to world peace.<sup>161</sup> The survey was conducted before the deployment of the 10th Battalion and before Swedish soldiers became involved in combat.

As seen, the motives – at least rhetorical – of responsibility, duty, people's rights and international peace and security played a significant role in deciding the Swedish action. Arguably further reinforcing the Swedish motives were two circumstances. First, Swedish troops were already in UN service, and could on short notice be transferred to the Congo. Secondly, the Secretary General was a Swedish national. This fact was never referred to as an actual motive, but it is reasonable to assume that it had a positive effect

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<sup>158</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24/9/1960.

<sup>159</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24/9/1960.

<sup>160</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 24/9/1960.

<sup>161</sup> SIFO, 8/11/1960. In all, 500 persons participated in the survey.

on the decision. As Nyman puts it: 'A Swedish withdrawal would probably have given Dag Hammarskjöld big problems on the international scene.'<sup>162</sup> What, then, was the Swedish position and view of the international scene?

### *Sweden, the Cold War and the Congo*

On a larger scale, Congolese independence and the following violence addressed two central themes: Sweden and the Cold War, and Sweden and decolonization. Both were, as discussed earlier, central and related themes in Swedish foreign policy. The ONUC, however, placed Swedish military personnel right in a Cold War hot spot; a decision that needed to be defended on the international stage. At the same time arguments regarding decolonization were translated into a concrete manifestation in the Congo, which also created questions about Swedish responsibility in Africa in general.

Very soon after the UN intervention in the Congo, a fierce debate broke out in the UN. The Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, attacked Hammarskjöld in the General Assembly, accusing him of using the UN troops for imperialist purposes and working in accordance with the USA's agenda. Khrushchev demanded his resignation.<sup>163</sup> This, of course, implicitly also meant that the Soviets were accusing Sweden, or at least Swedish soldiers, of misusing the UN mandate in the Congo. This caused Undén to defend the Swedish position in the UN, and shortly after, on 12 October, he addressed the General Assembly in an obvious response to Khrushchev's speech a little more than a week earlier. He emphasized Sweden's and other countries' complete confidence in the work of Hammarskjöld and the necessity of continuing operations in the Congo. Undén was also troubled over the fact that the Congo question had become a Cold War dispute:

Are we witnessing a clash of interests between some big Powers, and is it necessary that an action to assist the Congo, undertaken by the

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<sup>162</sup> Sofia Ekfeldt Nyman (1999), p. 35.

<sup>163</sup> A/PV.882, A/4534 & Add.1,2 9[1] UN. General Assembly (15TH Sess. : 1960-1961) - General Debate – Right of Reply (3/10 1960), Official Records, pp. 317–321.



United Nations, must lead to a taking of sides in favour of any one party in the Cold War?

Sometimes statements are made that seem to mean that it is in the nature of things that the Republic of the Congo is to be the object of a struggle for power between various groups of States. It is assumed that the interests of the Western Powers and those of the Eastern bloc must go apart.<sup>164</sup>

Undén then repeated the Swedish conditions and motives for its commitment to ONUC; ones similar to those explained to the Swedish public. Firstly, ONUC had been requested by the Congolese government. Secondly, it had been approved by the Security Council. In other words, it was in accordance with international law. Thirdly, and obviously important in the Cold War context, the Swedish troops were 'exclusively' under UN command and were not to be used in internal affairs. Undén, even though not explicitly, made this point clear. Sweden had no operative control over the soldiers, since they were under UN supervision. This could be interpreted as a way of saying that Sweden participated in a good cause, as long as the soldiers were used in accordance with the mandate. If they, for some reason, were not, the UN – not Sweden – should be blamed. The Swedish involvement was, Undén argued before the General Assembly, 'completely in line with our country's policy of neutrality.'

The fact that the Congo question was, or soon became, a Cold War dispute was of course no surprise to anyone. Karin Fogelberg has shown that East–West rivalry dominated the foreign news in the Swedish media during the 1960s. Almost all foreign news was connected to the Cold War struggle. A related theme, also well covered, was the decolonization movement. The combination of the two in the Congo crisis led to massive coverage in the Swedish media. In the new medium of television alone, 258 news reports concerning the Congo and ONUC were broadcasted between 1960 and 1963.<sup>165</sup> The main actors in the press in this drama during the early 1960s

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<sup>164</sup> A/PV.864-907. UN. General Assembly (15TH Sess.: 1960-1961) - General Debate – (12/10 1960), Official Records, pp. 659. English original.

<sup>165</sup> Karin Fogelberg (2004), pp. 89–90.

were the UN and the Soviet Union, represented particularly by Hammarskjöld and Khrushchev. The latter was described as an irrational and aggressive troublemaker and his attacks on Hammarskjöld were condemned.

The troublesome situation for the Congo itself received less media attention. The main objective seems to have been ensuring peace and security and preventing a 'new Korea', rather than helping the Congo to attain independence or protect the Congolese people. Humanitarian concerns were discussed in the press, but the suffering of the Congolese people was mostly overshadowed by international politics. The media had little confidence in the Congo and its people. The situation there, it was felt, needed to be solved by UN involvement, and the debate never focused on whether the Congo needed guidance or not, but rather how and by whom it should be carried out.



Image 3. Headline: 'What does the book say?' Book title: 'Fostering ABC'; pram: 'Independence', in *Dagens Nyheter*, 24/7/1960.

The view of the Congo was that of an underdeveloped country unable to solve its own problems. The blame for this was placed on the former colonial power Belgium and the Congolese themselves. A well-functioning nation had to be built with Western, democratic, enlightened and organized civilization as a model. Fogelberg shows that the same civilizing mission was a theme in Swedish television as well. Its correspondents used Swedish soldiers as the main actors in reports, and civilian life in the Congo was covered through the soldiers and their work.<sup>166</sup> The Congolese, or all Africans for that matter, were however not seen as intrinsically unable to govern themselves. Worries about the future of the Congo, *Dagens Nyheter* wrote, 'do not have to originate in thoughtlessness and prejudices about black men's inability to shoulder responsibility', but should rather be based on the former colonial powers' inability to prepare their colonies for independence, and 'no colonial power had ever left such a wretchedly poor legacy as Belgium.'<sup>167</sup> As the picture in *Dagens Nyheter* (Image 3) shows, the Congo was depicted as an angry infant with a gun, abandoned by its Belgian parents. To the left, Hammarskjöld – in a nursing uniform – is seen with a group of 'civilized' Africans, and is consulting a textbook on the fostering of children. No one seems to know what to do. The belief in the superiority of the Western democracies rested mainly on their self-given ability to help and guide what were seen as underdeveloped countries to become more like Western states. It was thought that this would, in the end, secure the independence, prosperity and well-being of the Congo, and was therefore considered a humanitarian goal.

### *The Swedish army and the formation of the Congo battalions in the 1960s*

The institution of the military ranges from the political levels of the Ministry of Defence down to the conscript soldiers. In this study, the branch of the army is particularly relevant. It was responsible for recruiting,

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<sup>166</sup> Karin Fogelberg (2004), pp. 105–106, 123.

<sup>167</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 24/7/1960.

equipping and training the ONUC battalions, which were by far the most UN-involved sections of the Swedish military. A pre-understanding of the Swedish army in 1960 is therefore very useful in order to see how the organization that shaped the ONUC battalions was structured. Also, the self-perception of the Swedish army acts as a benchmark against which the ONUC battalions can later be compared.

Keeping Haaland's notion of the *Homeland Defenders* in mind, we now turn to the Swedish army in the 1960s and the formation and structure of the Congo battalions. Can these be said to fit Haaland's model? As such this chapter serves to create a pre-understanding of the battalions' self-perception and is therefore in itself also an empirical study contributing to the larger study ahead.

The Swedish battalions all used conscript volunteers. Sweden was the only major contributor to ONUC to do so. Soldiers who applied for service as UN personnel were expected to have attained the grade of X-7-7 upon completing their compulsory military service. This meant a score of 10 out of 10 for 'behaviour', 7/10 for their 'suitability as soldiers' and the same result for 'knowledge and skills'.<sup>168</sup> Except for an additional 14 days of education, the regular Swedish military training was deemed sufficient. It is therefore valid to conclude that the Congo battalions prior to departure did not differ substantially from any other infantry battalions within the Swedish army. As discussed earlier, the ideal type of *Homeland Defender* was defined according to four criteria. The overall purpose was the defence of the homeland, while the main emphasis was placed on representativeness and democracy, and core values as similar to civil society as possible. Finally, in Haaland's model, the control by society was achieved by recruitment and education.

The magazine *Arménytt* (Army News) during the first years of the 1960s offers valuable insights into the Swedish army's self-perception. It is therefore useful for constructing a pre-understanding of the Swedish army as

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<sup>168</sup> 'Bestämmelser för rekrytering, uttagning och anställning av personal till frivillig FN-utbildning samt till svenska militära FN-kontingenter', 18/12/1961, Ast. FN Avd., Serie F1, Vol. 1, KrA; Nils Sköld (1994), p. 205.

*Homeland Defenders* in this period. The paper was produced by the army for its personnel, including conscripts and even retired officers.

The Swedish army in the 1960s was a large institution. Every capable young man was enlisted for about one year of compulsory military service. The army was first and foremost a national defence force that defined Sweden as geographically exposed in the midst of the tense Cold War. The key to keeping the peace was having a strong national army that, in the event of a war, could deploy a force comprising all male citizens from those in their late teens to men in their mid-forties. To be a good soldier was to be a good citizen, the Army Chief of Staff Thord Bonde wrote to the recruits in 1960.<sup>169</sup> In a peacetime army of conscripts, the line between civilian and military life was often blurred. By the conscript system, military service could easily be perceived as part of civilian life; a regular duty like going to school. While this emphasizes the point made by Haaland of core values being similar to those in civil society, it stirred some irritation within the Swedish army in the 1960s. The absence of warfare in modern Swedish history meant that the army had never been in armed conflict situations, and had consequently never tested the military–civilian relation in war. The problem was noted in *Arménytt* in 1960:

The military and the civilian can never be the same, the conditions differ too much. With war as [the] background for all our activity, we have to demand obedience, carefulness, hardness and hardship that have no, and need no, equivalent in civil life. Many things have, in a good and formal way been equalized between military and civilian. However, the experiences from other countries show how dangerous it is to let convenience and slackness dominate military work in peacetime. The improved living conditions, the more comfortable and relaxed civilian life instead means that the division between the military and civilian life again must increase. ... That division, hence inevitable and necessary, does however only include the structure,

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<sup>169</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 1, 1960, pp. 20 – 21.

education methods and demands of military work. Between the people there should be no division.<sup>170</sup>

Hence, military work was to be conducted by the (male) population. There should be no difference between the soldier and the civilian, except for the seriousness put into their work. Because of the hardships of a potential war, there was simply no room in the military for slackness or disobedience, otherwise considered common in civilian life. The Swedish soldier was furthermore expected to guard the core values of Swedish society, included in the 'citizen education' which was part of the military training. An article in *Arménytt* argued that more consideration should be given to this aspect of military training, and pointed to the model of the West German military; one which educated their soldiers in democracy and standing up for rights, freedom and human values based on free will and individual conviction. The same article contrasted these views with the politically indoctrinated Soviet soldier and the spoiled and uneducated US soldier. To be a soldier was to be a good citizen with the will to defend democratic society.<sup>171</sup> The emphasis on the citizen in arms also meant that the military was democratized alongside Swedish society in general. Since the 1950s every unit had a committee that could raise the soldiers' concerns in a discussion forum. In the mid-1960s, influenced by the newly-won strike right of state employees in 1965, the conscript soldiers called for a nationwide organization to voice their views. This was realized in 1970 when the Conscript Congress was formed.<sup>172</sup>

In *Arménytt*, representatives of the army emphasized that the conscript army in peacetime guaranteed an effective people's defence in wartime. Combined with its civil defence organizations, Sweden was well defended with a force of more than a million people.<sup>173</sup> Taken as a whole, the Swedish army's self-perception in the 1960s fitted well with the ideal image of the Homeland

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<sup>170</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 3, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 3, 1960, pp. 16–17.

<sup>172</sup> Lars Ericson Wolke (1999), pp. 227–228.

<sup>173</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 4, 1960, pp. 14 – 15; *Arménytt*, nr. 3, 1961, pp. 30 – 32; *Arménytt*, nr. 4, 1961, pp. 2–3.

Defender. This also meant that UN service fell outside what was considered the duty of national defence. On the contrary, UN service was considered by leading representatives of the military to diminish the army's capacity and thus weaken its ability to defend the country. Both the UNEF and ONUC participations were political decisions that met with scepticism from the military.<sup>174</sup> During 1960 the Swedish government examined the possibility of offering the UN a standby force that could, on short notice, respond to UN requests. The question was referred to the army for consideration. In his reply, the Supreme Commander, Nils Swedlund, argued that with troops deployed in Gaza and the Congo at the same time, the Swedish army was stretched to its limits, and to provide additional personnel for UN service would lead to 'non-acceptable consequences' for the defence of Sweden. The army would be short of equipment, personnel and knowledge, it was argued. The UN battalions were not considered to be a part of the Swedish army. For instance, rather than being equipped by the domestic army, the UN battalions in Gaza and the Congo were considered to have 'borrowed' equipment from the army storehouses.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, however, it was clear that there could be some positive effects of UN service. Given that at least one of the two battalions in service was withdrawn and that the UN battalions were given a separate and additional budget, the military would endorse the project. The quality of the troops should be high, Swedlund noted, since 'foreign powers' evaluation of the Swedish armed forces to a large extent is affected by the efforts of our UN forces'.<sup>176</sup>

*Arménytt* reported regularly from both the UNEF and the ONUC, focusing on the exotic environments, the personal adventures and experiences. In 1960 the missions were considered relatively safe and rewarding on a personal level but were not integrated in the greater aims of the military

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<sup>174</sup> Nils Sköld (1990), pp. 40–41; Nils Sköld (1994), p. 67.

<sup>175</sup> 'Pressmeddelande från försvarsstaben den 1 december', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1960*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1961), pp. 85–87.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. The question of a standby UN force had been discussed with varying intensity since 1948 but was, in the case of Sweden, not fully realized until the formation of NGB in 2007. In 1962, as a complement to the mandatory military service, a voluntary additional 'UN training' was offered. In 1964, the *Riksdag* voted to supply additional funding to the project. See Nils Sköld (1990), pp. 235–237.

institution. Rather, the reports in *Arménytt* bore similarities with adventure stories or exiting documentaries. Soldiers were interviewed about their motives for UNEF service, and said that personal adventure and good salaries were their primary motives.<sup>177</sup> Interest for military matters, seen from the army's point of view, came in connection with the fighting in Elizabethville in 1961. Suddenly the Swedish soldiers in the Congo became the first regular unit to fight a war since 1814, which stirred some interest in regard to the quality of Swedish soldiers and their equipment. In general the Swedish soldiers, and thereby the Swedish military's educational system, were celebrated as competent, reliable and efficient. Or, as the commander of the 12th and 14th battalions, Jonas Wærn, put it in an article: 'Good soldier material, good training, initiative and adaptability make a Swedish conscript soldier superior to the foreign professional soldier'.<sup>178</sup> The question of motives, however, was not touched upon in *Arménytt*.<sup>179</sup>

In the early 1960s Swedish soldiers served both in the UNEF and the ONUC. At the administrative level the UN involvement started to become too comprehensive to be conducted by the personnel of the Army Staff. In 1961 a special UN department within the Army Staff was created. An internal evaluation report by the Department of UN Affairs within the Army Staff in 1964 summarized the Swedish UN participation in a positive way. Again, the opportunity to 'test' Swedish soldiers and equipment in action was pointed out as rewarding, especially since they both generally performed very well.<sup>180</sup> This, of course, gave both the officers and lower ranks experiences valuable for the military. It also reflected back on Sweden as a country with a competent military, which of course worked well for the reputation of Sweden, it was argued.<sup>181</sup> Above all, however, it was the duty of Sweden as a nation to respond to UN requests. The UN was, after all, an organization of peace, and to participate in fulfilling that ambition was positive in itself.

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<sup>177</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 2, 1960, was dedicated to UNEF.

<sup>178</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 6, 1961, p. 6.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–16.

<sup>180</sup> 'Sveriges militära FN-insatser', 1/11/1964, Ast. FN-Avd, F4, Vol 1, KrA, pp. 14–16, 20.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.



In total, nine different Swedish infantry battalions served in the ONUC from July 1960 to May 1964. Seven of them, battalions 10 to 22<sup>182</sup>, were recruited to serve in ONUC, while the other two were Gaza battalions transferred to the Congo as reinforcements. The strength in numbers of the Swedish troops in the Congo varied from over 1,100 (in the second half of 1961) to just over 300 in the final days of the ONUC mission. In all, over 5,000 Swedish soldiers served in the Congo.

Table 3. Swedish ONUC Battalions 1960–64<sup>183</sup>

Bat. no.	Strength	Commander	Time of service
VIII G	660	Col. Bernt Juhlin	May 1960 – November 1960
X K	533	Col. Anders Kjellgren	November 1960 – June 1961
XI G	603	Col. Gösta Frykman	April 1961 – November 1961
XII K	567	Col. Jonas Wærn	June 1961 – December 1961
XIV K	653	Col. Jonas Wærn	December 1961 – May 1962
XVI K	662	Col. Sten Eggert Naclér	May 1962 – October 1962
XVIII K	698	Col. Nils-Olof Hederén	October 1962 – April 1963
XX K	528	Col. Nils-Olof Hederén	April 1963 – December 1963
XXII K	303	Lt Col. Vollrath Tham	December 1963 – May 1964

The battalions were trained and equipped in Sweden. For the early Gaza and Congo battalions, the training was less than 14 days and mainly focused on equipping and vaccinating the soldiers. The scheduled complementary UN training, that began in the spring of 1962, was 14 days and in all 96 hours

<sup>182</sup> From 1960 battalions serving the ONUC were given even numbers (10, 12, 14 etc.) while the ones serving the UNEF were given uneven numbers (9, 11, 13, etc.).

<sup>183</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), based on Appendix 12.6, p. 262.

for private soldiers.<sup>184</sup> The goal of the complementary training was to provide:

knowledge of the UN's organization and activities in peacekeeping,  
[its] purpose and the conditions that UN service implies,

knowledge of climate and terrain conditions, under which service  
might be conducted, the demands it places and

good skills in solving tasks, within the UN framework, that might be  
placed on the individual or the unit.<sup>185</sup>

Lessons in the structure and organization of the UN, codes of conduct, general behaviour, 'race issues', foreign policy and the Geneva Convention did not, however, take up more than 6 of the 96 hours.<sup>186</sup> Most of the hours were used for drill (66) and administrative work (12).<sup>187</sup> According to Sten Naucér, commander of the 16th Battalion, the short time was considered enough to enable an unproblematic relief of the battalion then in place only if focus was placed on 'solving tasks, within the UN framework' under the supervision and guidance of veterans of former battalions.<sup>188</sup>

The warlike situation that arose in Elizabethville in December 1961 put the military in a position where it had to deal with the fact that soldiers were lost in combat. Military operations always involve taking risks and soldiers had earlier been killed while serving in the UNEF, but the combat situation was new. Questions concerning the motives for risktaking arose. In one

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<sup>184</sup> 'Särskilda anvisningar för utbildning av förband, avsedda för FN-tjänst (SUFN), 1962 års upplaga', FN-BAT XIV, Sektion 1 E, Vol. 15, KrA, p. 1. All soldiers had, of course, gone through regular conscript training of approximately 10–12 months. Officers had an additional 40 hours of training for UN service.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 2, What was actually taught and included under these headings has not been found.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 2–4, plus physical training (4), support duty (4) and time-reserve (4).

<sup>188</sup> 'Rapport över FN.bat XVI K befälsövning och kompletterande FN-utbildning mot bakgrunden av erfarenheterna från de första veckorna av bat tjänstgöring i Kongo', 22/6/1962, Ast. FN-Avd, F4, Vol. 2, KrA, pp. 6–7.

1962 evaluation document it was pointed out that more focus should be placed on education in UN matters. Knowing the political aims and values of the UN would help the soldiers to understand the reasons they were fighting. According to the document, this in turn was essential as a psychological preparedness for any combat situation during UN service.<sup>189</sup>

Little material from the education remains in the archives, but in connection with the training the soldiers were given a 107-page manual called *Anvisningar för svensk trupps uppträdande under tropiska förhållanden* (Instructions for the behaviour of Swedish troops under tropical conditions) (1960). The manual included information about tropical diseases and how to avoid them, guidance and rules for how to control crowds, how to march and set up camps in tropical conditions, a short Swahili lexicon and an introductory chapter on the structure and aims of the UN. Also, the first chapter in the manual explained what was expected of the soldiers and how they should behave in the Congo. On the very first page the readers were addressed by the special representative of the Secretary General, Ralph Bunche, and the UN force commander, Carl von Horn:

You serve as members of an international force. It is a force for peace, not for combat. ... You shall show kindness towards the people of the country. All humans, black and white, shall be protected against violence.

You carry weapons, but they shall be used only in self-defence.

You are in the Congo to help all, not to hurt anyone.

Your behaviour shall be of the sort that gives honour to your country and the United Nations.

Here you serve the United Nations. Your orders for the completion of this task will, through your officers, come from the United Nations alone...<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> 'Erfarenheter från striderna i Kongo i september och december 1961', 12/2/1962, Ast/FN-Avd, Serie F4, Vol. 2, KrA, p. 10.

<sup>190</sup> *Anvisningar för svensk trupps uppträdande under tropiska förhållanden*, (Stockholm: Arméstaben, 1960), p. 7.

These words conveyed the clear message that peacekeeping was something different from traditional soldiering. The complexity of peacekeeping in general was expressed well: everybody should be protected against violence while at the same time no one should be hurt. There existed no enemy, everyone should be helped. The first chapter elaborated further on what good behaviour meant and what was expected of the soldiers. Besides the physical requirements and trust in one's own abilities, it was assumed that the soldiers had a 'moral backbone'. This included a feeling of responsibility towards all those involved: one's own battalion, UN battalions from other countries, as well as the 'natives'. The responsibility also included an understanding of the situation in the Congo and the task ahead. It was further expected that the soldiers had 'good cooperation abilities' and the will to use them. While it more than once was noted that the UN was the 'employer' in the sense of command and orders, it was pointed out that the soldiers were also in the service of Sweden and the Congo.



Image 4. The Swedish UN soldier and his expected skills. (From left to right shoulder): *Understanding, Ethical, Easily adaptable, Good physique, Mental balance, Ability to cooperate, Independent, Inspiring confidence, Responsibility*. In *Anvisningar för svensk trupps uppträdande under tropiska förhållanden*, Arméstaben, 1960, p. 9.

The job of the Homeland Defender was to protect the homeland. This, of course, included the protection of civilians (one's family and friends). The portrayal of the civilians – or the 'natives', as they were consistently termed – was problematic from the outset. Without any reference to the political landscape, different tribal structures, traditional rivalries or the history of the Congo, the natives appeared to form a single Congolese population. As such they were entitled to protection by the UN, but at the same time were seen as the problem. A separate chapter dealt with how to control crowds, with different techniques from escorting and observing all the way up to, as a last

resort (danger to one's own life), lining up for battle. The view of the natives, as described by the manual, was extremely stereotypical. The soldiers were instructed to 'treat the locals with politeness and respect, kindness, calmness and firmness.' As long as one was careful it should work out well, since '[t]he natives have a natural habit for kindness.'<sup>191</sup> The natives were also thought to carry all kinds of diseases. In general, all contact with the natives should be limited as much as possible. The risk of contracting a venereal disease combined with the risk of disrespecting the natives' 'high sexual morale...' made it absolutely forbidden for the soldiers to 'address, initiate conversation or in other respects engage women.' It was emphasized (with double underlining) that doing so was a severe disciplinary offence.<sup>192</sup> In 1962, the manual was augmented with a *Kongoguide för FN-soldater* (Congo Guide for UN Soldiers), aimed at describing the different locations in the Congo in further detail.<sup>193</sup>

The control of the battalions after they left Sweden was transferred to the UN. The Swedish Army Staff had no possibility of deciding where and how the battalions were to be used within the Congo. That was a matter for the UN military command. The fact that Swedish soldiers were killed, overloaded with work or unstrategically used could therefore not be blamed on the Army Staff. It had not placed them there and had no strategic command whatsoever. Rather, it became a problem for the UN or Swedish politicians.

### *The soldiers*

At this stage something must be said about the soldiers and their individual motives. As discussed earlier, this has a limited, although important, bearing on the overall questions in this study. Like Östen Undén is set to represent and voice the political perceptions of the decision before ONUC, and Thord Bonde or Jonas Wærn captures the perceptions of the military, the

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-14, 75-77.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 17. The ban on sexual relations was, however, not followed in the Congo, and many soldiers frequently visited prostitutes or had other sexual relations. See, for instance, Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 288, 402, Erik Lindholm (2005), pp. 78-84.

<sup>193</sup> *Kongoguide för FN-soldater*, (Stockholm: Arméstaben, 1962).

accounts of a few soldiers can help one to discern the perception of the individual soldier. Also, the use of statistical material can be helpful. In 1962, *Militärpsykologiska institutet*, MPI (The Institute of Military Psychology), conducted surveys and interviews of personnel from the 12th, 14th and 16th battalions. In the case of expectations and motives, the MPI material from the 16th battalion is of special interest, as this was the only battalion questioned about motives. Also, it seems to have been the only survey conducted *before* the mission.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, in 1997 one of the Swedish veterans of the ONUC, Lars Frost, took it upon himself to conduct a survey of memories and experiences among Swedish soldiers who served in Congo in the 1960–64 period. From 210 requests for information from individuals he received 156 anonymous answers to the 88 questions. Naturally the questionnaire, appearing 33 years after the end of the ONUC, lacks proximity to the historical events it tries to capture. It is, however, a unique survey in its extent and type of questions; and statistically, 156 answers must be considered a sufficient amount to provide for some generalization. Acknowledging that many soldiers served in more than one battalion, the questionnaire also can be said to cover 284 ‘battalion experiences’.<sup>195</sup> The two surveys are similar in regard to the number of participants and questions asked. The surveys have, however, substantial differences that need to be noted. First, 35 years separate them. In Frost’s survey, the former soldiers have had half a lifetime to contemplate their experiences and memories. They have had time to acquire new experiences, with which the older ones can be compared, and have had time to compare their Congo experiences with those of other veterans. As many as 87 per

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<sup>194</sup> Walter Korpi & Ruth Nisbel, ‘MPI, Specialrapport Nr. 4, maj 1962, Stridsreaktioner samt informations- och propagandaverksamhet vid ett förband under fältförhållanden. redogörelse från en förundersökning genomförd i den XII. svenska FN-bataljonen’; Ruth Nisbel, ‘MPI, Rapport Nr. 24, december 1963, Enkätundersökningar med FN-personal som tjänstgjort i Kongo 1962.’

The survey was not anonymous, but confidential. The only personnel with access to the names on the questionnaires were those with the MPI. This was emphasized in the instructions attached to the questions. ‘It is only [MPI], which handles the work, that will read what you write, and all of them have professional secrecy. We would like to emphasize that none of your superiors or any outsider will be allowed to acquaint themselves with your answers.’ MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Bilaga 3.

<sup>195</sup> Lars Frost (1997), p. 3.

cent of those asked answered that they had met other veterans after their UN service; something most of them described as positive meetings.<sup>196</sup> Also worth considering is the possibility of changing motives. The situation, meetings and new experiences in the Congo could easily and quickly have changed the motives *during* the mission to becoming something else than they initially were. Looking back on an event that took place 35 years ago, it might be difficult to separate the motives. The majority of the soldiers of the 16th Battalion had no former UN experience to look back on. The MPI survey, however, only includes members of the 16th battalion. Statistics by no means always provide a correct account of opinions or attitudes. In fact, statistics can lie. People can answer questions untruthfully, consciously or not. There might be motives for service never expressed; soldiers perhaps told the MPI what they thought the MPI wanted to hear. Furthermore, the statistics might not be representative. The result from the survey of parts of the 16th Battalion was perhaps unique for them. Their predecessors of the 12th and 14th battalions had been involved in combat and suffered casualties. This was known by the members of the 16th battalion, which might have caused their attitudes to differ from those of former battalions. Dealing with statistics is tricky, and can create a false sense of an easy way to reach general conclusions. That being said, statistics can provide a good basis in almost any study. Treated in the right way, they can be a useful historical source.<sup>197</sup>

Results from all surveys will be used throughout this study as one source for individual experiences of the ONUC. In this chapter, however, the preconditions, expectations and training before the mission are in focus, which makes the MPI survey a more valuable source than 'the Congo inquiry'.

### *Who were they?*

The core values of the Homeland Defender, according to Haaland, lie close to those of civil society. This also implies that the army was representative of

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-41.

<sup>197</sup> See for instance Pat Hudson (2000).



the male civil population generally. Can the same be said about the Congo battalions? It is hard to identify a 'typical ONUC Swede' from the statistical material, but some preliminary understanding is possible. Based on dates of birth for members of the 14th Battalion formed and deployed in 1961, the average age at the time of recruitment was 24.7. This, however, includes the officers, who in general were professional soldiers, older than the recruited soldiers. It should be noted that a majority (58.4 per cent) of the soldiers were between 20 and 24 years old.<sup>198</sup> It was a young battalion. Therefore it is not surprising that 83 per cent of the battalion personnel were bachelors. A large proportion of the soldiers (49 per cent of the 14th Battalion and 58 per cent of the 16th Battalion) were farmers or industrial workers in their civilian lives.<sup>199</sup>

### *Individual motives and perceptions before the ONUC*

Why did men volunteer for UN service in the first place, and what did they expect? Before looking more closely at the motives for UN service it should be noted that the 'pull' factors substantially exceeded the 'push' factors, according to the surveys. Almost three out of four soldiers of the 16th Battalion stated that they enjoyed their civil employment, while only 8 per cent disliked their jobs. Based on the answers to the question of motives, only a few can be said to have been 'pushed' towards recruitment.<sup>200</sup> The survey conducted by MPI among some members (166) of the 16th Battalion is the only one in which questions of motives were asked before the mission. Many different motives for UN service were stated in this study, but overall four main categories appear. The first two, 'the search for adventure' and 'take the opportunity to see the world', are somewhat hard to separate and could be treated as one category that, perhaps a little bluntly, could be labelled 'self-fulfilling motives'. The other two, 'economic motives' and 'altruistic motives', are somewhat easier to classify.

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<sup>198</sup> Table I:1, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga, pp. 2, 29.

<sup>199</sup> Table I:2, Table I:3 and Table II:4, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga, p. 3. The civilian occupations were determined according to the 'Nordic Occupation Classification'. 'Farmers' also included forestry workers and fishermen.

<sup>200</sup> Table, II:5 and Table II:9, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, pp. 30, 32.

The question of motive was formulated as 'Why did you apply for UN service?'. This was an 'open' question and several answers could be given. An overwhelming majority (70 per cent) of the soldiers in the 16th Battalion stated the self-fulfilling 'to take the opportunity to see other countries' as at least one of their motives.<sup>201</sup> Unless the same soldiers were among those 26 who stated 'the adventure' or the 9 who looked for 'excitement', the self-fulfilling goals make up an even larger proportion of the total. A similar view is presented in 'Kongoenkäten', where among the 321 answers given (from 156 persons), 208 fell into this category. The exotic adventure itself seems to have had a pulling effect on many of them. Partly based on his diary, soldier Erik Lindholm described the moment of his decision to apply for Congo service.

I, who hated military service, viewed it as forced labour and degradation, a necessary evil to get through without losing self-esteem. When the great Congo fever appeared among the guys, I was the one who advised against going, painted images of dangers in Africa, war and disease, the heat and the alienation. Then, I became one of the few who applied. I found an application form ... under a bed when I alone cleaned the barrack room. It was Saturday and all were on leave, except me. ... 'Congo', the paper said, and something exploded in my brain. The adventure! The ultimate challenge. The chance to see something that I otherwise never would get the possibility to see. 'Congo' it said, and Africa gave me the shivers when I filled out the form. A couple of weeks later I was accepted.<sup>202</sup>

Lindholm, who served with the 12th Battalion from June 1961, was obviously a conscript soldier immediately before applying for ONUC. The account bears witness to an adventure-driven 'Congo fever' among the conscript soldiers, even though only a few in the end applied. For Lars Frost himself, the decision to apply for the 12th Battalion was easy to make. Frost liked military life, and the search for excitement drew him to apply for

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<sup>201</sup> Table II:9, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, p. 32.

<sup>202</sup> Erik Lindholm (2005), p. 8.

service abroad. Few Swedes had ever been to Africa in 1960, and an opportunity to visit the Congo was too good to miss.<sup>203</sup>

In the two remaining categories of economic and altruistic motives, the two surveys differ. In the MPI study 39 per cent, and in 'Kongoenkäten' 16 per cent of the soldiers stated that they had an economic motive. This is not surprising. Idealistic motives tend to gain importance over time. For someone looking back on the time of their UN service, perhaps long service, economic motives could easily be downplayed in the light of new experiences. Other motives grew stronger during the time of service, and for soldiers applying for their third or fourth battalion, motives might well have been different than they had been for their first battalion. The possibility to make and save money was enticing. The job was not particularly well paid, but because the soldiers did not need to spend any money on food, housing or clothing while in service, a large portion could be saved for the future. Also, a daily allowance for expenses was given to the soldiers, as well as a bonus for anyone who signed up for an additional battalion.<sup>204</sup> Another soldier, Jan Åkerman, 19 years old at the time, remembered that he was asked if he wanted to serve in the UN after completing his mandatory military service. 'Well, you know...poor kid, father was not highly-paid, mother was home ... so one took the opportunity to see the world.'<sup>205</sup> The more altruistic motives – 'to make a contribution to world peace' or to take 'an interest in the UN work' – were represented in less than 9 per cent of the given answers. For the 'Kongoenkäten' this figure increases to 36 per cent of the answers. Frost had no recollection of those motives carrying any particular weight in his decision.<sup>206</sup> The self-fulfilling motives of excitement, adventure and the exotic environment of the tropics were by far the greatest pulling factor in both surveys. The possibility to see parts of 'wild' Africa, while at the same time earning money, represented for many an opportunity to good to be missed.

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<sup>203</sup> Conversation with Lars Frost, 20/1/2009.

<sup>204</sup> "Bestämmelser för rekrytering, uttagning och anställning av personal till frivillig militär FN-utbildning samt till svenska militära FN-kontingenter", 18/12/1961, Bilaga 2, Ast. FN-Avd, Serie F1, Vol. 1, KrA, pp. 3–4.

<sup>205</sup> Conversation with Jan Åkerman, 22/1/2009.

<sup>206</sup> Conversation with Lars Frost, 20/1/2009.

The MPI survey also included questions before the mission regarding what the soldiers knew, or thought they knew, about the civilian population in the Congo. These questions were separated into questions on the 'black population' and questions on the 'white population'. The purpose was to ask the same questions after the mission in order to compare and see in what way opinions had changed. The questions were open, and in the concluding report the MPI simply summarized opinions as 'negative', 'positive' or 'neutral'. With reservation for that we don't know what the MPI thought was a positive or negative answer<sup>207</sup>, it can be concluded that 46 per cent of the soldiers had given 'negative' or 'negative + neutral' answers, while 4 per cent had given 'positive' or 'positive + neutral' answers, in regard to the black part of the civilian population.<sup>208</sup> As for the white civilian population (the Belgians), 63 per cent had no opinion or did not know. Only 2 per cent were positive, while 13 per cent expressed negative opinions.<sup>209</sup> The answers indicate, even though they are of limited use, that members of the 16th Battalion had, in general, a negative view of the civilian population in the Congo before the mission. Why this was the case is open to speculation. That racial prejudice can explain some of the results is not far-fetched. It is also reasonable to assume that the chaotic situation in the Congo, where people killed and got killed, did not give rise to many positive opinions in general. We shall return to these questions later on. It can also be concluded that the members of the 16th Battalion were not particularly well informed about the political background to the Congo crisis, even though they just had completed their UN training.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> How would, for instance, the answers 'I know some of them are very poor' or 'Most of them have no education' be interpreted? Furthermore, and as the MPI also noted, these answers are problematic to use for ascertaining racial prejudices.

<sup>208</sup> Table II:22, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, pp. 37. 36 per cent said they had no opinion, or simply did not answer the question.

<sup>209</sup> Table II:23, MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, pp. 37.

<sup>210</sup> 60 per cent of the soldiers had correctly or fairly correctly answered this question. A correct answer, according to the MPI, would something in line with: 'The crisis began in 1960 when the Congo became independent from Belgium. Severe riots followed shortly after the day of independence. Tshombe took the opportunity to declare independence for Katanga. Lumumba requested UN assistance and troops arrived by the end of 1960. Negotiations have taken place between the central government in

### *Conclusion*

On the political level the situation in the Congo left Sweden with little choice. The Swedish public was well informed about the events unfolding in the Congo but, just as other peoples in 1960, unable to fully comprehend the complex drama of world politics. The situation in the Congo altered at fast pace, and the media reported daily from violent scenes in the streets of Leopoldville as well as from furious debates in the UN. From an 'official' Swedish standpoint, the combination of three related main arguments made the decision to participate an easy one. Firstly, the sheer humanitarian situation in the Congo clearly showed that the young nation and its citizens really needed help and security in their struggle for independence. This harmonized with Sweden's ideological standpoint as argued in the United Nations. Secondly, the UN had a good reputation in Sweden, and to support the organization was akin to helping an ally in trouble. There existed an interest in boosting the power and legitimacy of the organization itself. In 1960 the organization was still young and the belief that the United Nations could make a difference and help create a better world was common in Sweden. Thirdly, the Swedish government was officially asked to help the UN; a request Sweden could not refuse since it placed the government in a position where it could not evade involvement without publicly denying UN help. This would probably also have put the government in a difficult position vis-à-vis public opinion in regard to the two earlier mentioned arguments. It was a question of fulfilling Sweden's duty towards the UN.

The decision to respond to the UN call would not, however, necessarily have had to involve a larger military unit. Sweden had earlier, as in the Korea conflict, answered UN requests for help, with limited, non-fighting units such as observers or medical staff. The realities of the Congo conflict, however, were different. Sweden had, at the time, soldiers serving in Gaza who could on short notice and relatively easily be transferred to the Congo. The Cold War drama also played out differently in the Congo. Unlike in Korea, the entire Security Council, including the Soviet Union, had

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Leopoldville and Katanga regarding the merging of Katanga and the actual Congo. These negotiations have so far been without result.' MPI Rapport Nr. 24, p.11.

supported a peacekeeping operation (however, the Soviets were soon to become critical of how it was conducted) and there was, at the outset, no question of the legality of the operation. Furthermore, even though both politicians and the media in Sweden foresaw that the Congo mission would be more demanding and violent than the UNEF, no one could anticipate that Swedish soldiers – the ‘police force’ – would fight in warlike situations a year later.

Representatives of the Swedish army were far less interested in the Congo mission than the politicians. For the military, and the army in particular, the ONUC meant a loss of resources (equipment, personnel and competence) that weakened the ability to defend Sweden. The Swedish army fitted well into what Haaland calls the Homeland Defenders, which meant that the core concern was protection of the homeland. Still, apart from the economic argument regarding a loss of resources, it seems there was no or little opposition towards UN involvement from the army.

In addition to the main purpose of defending Sweden, representatives of the army emphasized that the military consisted of citizens in military service. The difference between military and civilian life was therefore limited to the conditions in which they worked, which in turn meant that the Swedish military, as an organization, shared the values of civil society. Again, this correlates well with Haaland’s notion of the core values of the Homeland Defenders being very similar to those of civil society. The UN and the Swedish army placed heavy responsibility on the young soldiers. They were to be calm and cautious, but firm and effective. They should show understanding and respect, they should help and protect. They should serve the UN, Sweden and the Congo at the same time, and as soldiers be prepared to fight if necessary. The soldiers themselves, young as they were, were in general not driven by any political convictions or altruistic motives. For a majority of them, the paid adventure and exotic environment of Africa had a strong appeal. Or, as Åkerman put it: ‘It is very little one understands at the age of twenty.’<sup>211</sup>

Motives and attitudes varied widely from the political and public level down to the individual soldiers. Those who decided and those who spoke in the

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<sup>211</sup> Conversation with Jan Åkerman, 2009-01-22.

public discourse focused on Swedish foreign policy and obligations towards the UN, while those who left for the Congo based their decision in another context. Furthermore, the army had its own motives. While this conclusion is somewhat uncontroversial and might have been foreseen, it sets the conditions for the challenge to the analytic trinity.

## 5. War and combat in the Congo

### *Disturbing order*

It would be impossible not to grant the actual fighting the recognition it deserves as a key ingredient in the forming of a battalion's self-perception. War and warlike situations tend to push arguments, events and identities to their extremes. The Congo drama in Katanga was, without any doubt, on several occasions a matter of life and death for those involved. Furthermore, the combat situations involving Swedish soldiers must have generated challenges for actors on the public level, the institutional level and the governmental level. As noted in the previous chapter, the motives, pre-understandings and preconditions at those levels varied. What was a matter of international duty for the state was perhaps a testing ground for the military institution, and at the same time a personal exotic adventure on the individual level. This caused few problems as long as the mission remained in its pre-understood form: a policing, peacekeeping mission in Africa. The battalions' duty was to monitor the Congo situation, and ideally the UN presence alone would be enough to keep the different factions apart. The presence of military strength and the impartiality embedded in the UN mandate would be sufficient to stop the violence and to create a political climate necessary for resolving the crisis by diplomatic means. Such a scenario, which had mostly worked well for the UNEF in Gaza, would have created little disturbance between the different analytic nodes. Regardless of what pre-understanding the arguments were based upon before the ONUC, the different analytic nodes still reached the same conclusion on how to act, which was to dispatch a peacekeeping mission to the Congo.

However, when the extremities of warlike situations or war itself occurred, this altered the basis for the pre-understanding and the different views became more apparent. The three nodes of analysis reacted to, and formulated their opinion towards, the new situation. This in turn, as we shall see, challenged the former consensus.



In 1960 the Swedish government, the media and plenty of volunteers had welcomed the mission, albeit on slightly different grounds. Representatives of the military institution had initially been less enthusiastic towards what they considered to be a weakening of the Swedish defence capability, but had taken the task given to them seriously. The Swedish battalion entering Katanga in 1960 was therefore, from a Swedish point of view, rather unproblematic. However, while the 'what to do' had gained consensus, the 'why' was not really sorted out. In many instances the latter had been packaged within the term 'duty'. In turn, 'duty' had been used without deeper reflections on the different meanings of the term. In predicting that the ONUC would unfold in about the same way as the UNEF, the different 'whys' would not matter much anyway. A peacekeeping mission continuously complying with its pre-understood form would raise little challenge to questions about the 'why'. The soldiers would patrol and guard key locations and, most importantly, the conflicting parties would respect and welcome the peacekeepers. The motives for executing such a mission could remain different and still be rather unproblematic. Duty as a motive would then not be challenged, since the mission would be 'in order'.

The real challenge to the operation was when the order was disturbed; when something 'out of order' or unexpected occurred. Then the 'why' came under scrutiny. In the case of the Swedish OUNC participation, this 'disturbance' became most obvious when the Swedish troops became involved in combat situations. Combat is dangerous and dramatic and it must be dealt with. This was when motives were tested at different levels. For the individual soldier, fundamental questions about motive and duty then appeared. When duty brought the soldiers into positions that were obviously dangerous, where their lives were at risk and where they had to shoot at, and even kill people, the duty-motive relation was challenged. This in turn had implications for the battalion, since it was dependent on the soldiers doing their duty. The hypothesis would be that if duty becomes too dangerous, too horrible, too hard, too frightening or too unwelcomed, the forces behind the motive cannot counterbalance the duty and a crisis appears. In such a scenario it falls to the battalion as a collective to motivate soldiers to do their duty, or for the soldiers to, by other means, reformulate the motive to fit the duty. The alternative is disobedience or desertion. Likewise, the duty-motive relation was also challenged within other segments of society; in focus here, the media, the government and the

military institution. Of these, the government and the media in particular had frequently used the term 'duty' as a motive for action. The challenges will be examined below.

One significant factor is the term 'war' itself. Initially, it might seem nothing more than semantic trivia to try to show who labelled a situation as war or not, but it has interesting consequences. War has different meanings in different contexts. What is called war in a Clausewitzian sense, war between states and armies, is perhaps not applicable in the case of the Swedish ONUC participation. On the micro level at the scene of combat, however, war is at times perhaps a justified term of description. It is not the purpose of this book to reach conclusions regarding any such labelling, but rather to explore how the term was used and what elements it was held to contain.

In order to examine the theme of war and combat, focus is placed on three different aspects. First, the experience of war and combat as it happened and immediately thereafter. How was it described and what did it mean? Secondly, the complexity of motives in relation to the combat is looked at as a collective phenomenon in order to find answers to why the soldiers fought, for whom they fought and what they thought about it. The third and final aspect relating to the question of war and combat is, of course, the views on the enemy. How were their opponents described and dealt with?

The literature on the Congo crisis is generally divided into three chronological phases, as described in Chapter 3. The theme of war and combat can also be divided into three phases, albeit here three slightly different ones. In the chronological story of the Swedish military action taken in the Congo between 1960 and 1964, three different types of contexts can be discerned; three contexts that set the basis for an interesting comparison within the short overall time span.

First, during the 10th Battalion's six-month service from November 1960 until June 1961, Swedish soldiers were on two occasions attacked by Baluba warriors along the railway through Katanga. These incidents were the first acts of combat encountered by Swedish regular forces in 146 years, and were of course widely covered in the Swedish media. While from a military perspective they could hardly be described as anything more than skirmishes, together they were still the first 'live test' not only for the soldiers involved but also for Sweden as a peacekeeping nation.

The second phase of combat occurred in the autumn and winter of 1961 and included the 12th and the 14th Battalions. This time the situation was very different. Unlike the first combat events, the UN this time was on the offensive. Following the Security Council's decision to expel foreign mercenaries from Katanga, the UN forces planned and executed attacks on key buildings and strongholds in Elizabethville. Also, unlike the first combat events, this time the soldiers faced a far better equipped and led enemy, the Katangan gendarmerie. Further, during the fighting in Elizabethville Swedish soldiers were killed and wounded.

The third and final phase of the UN military action in Katanga took place in the winter of 1962 and early 1963 and included the 18th Battalion, now operating from Kamina in the central parts of Katanga. During the operations the Swedish soldiers once again had an offensive role, sometimes even fighting alongside the central government forces, on the final advance to crush the gendarmerie and end the Katangan secession.

The three phases have been dealt with in three different chapters dealing with the theme of war and combat. Each of them are analysed and summed up separately before coming together in a final analysis and conclusion.

### *Abnormal soldiering in the Congo*

First of all it must be recognized that the duties performed by the Swedish soldiers varied significantly. Some soldiers had a relatively peaceful time in the Congo, while others found themselves involved in very traumatic situations, including combat. It should also at this point be emphasized that while combat for most people is a frustrating activity, there were likewise other stressful duties the soldiers performed. The management of the huge refugee camp, the capture of Swedes by the enemy, or the sometimes long periods of doing nothing at all while stationed in an distant area, can be given as examples. These activities will be further explored in subsequent chapters. This, however, also highlights perhaps one of the most frustrating circumstances during the Congo mission: the lack of a pre-determined role for the soldiers. The shifting political situations within the vast country, as well as the political struggle within the UN itself, placed the military contingents in a position they had hardly encountered before. Dispatched to an area the size of Western Europe, the UN force in 1960 had troops from

29 nations with various military experiences. From a military point of view the UN force was far too small and underequipped to be able to control the Congo, let alone wage any kind of war. The UN Force Commander at the time, Carl von Horn, remembered pointing out to Dag Hammarskjöld that if the UN were to enter Katanga, thereby adding 190,000 square kilometres to the area of operation, he would need 'five or six brigades, at least one squadron of tanks, two reconnaissance units, several field and anti-aircraft regiments[,] and an air element of reconnaissance and fighter planes and sufficient transport squadrons to maintain thoroughly adequate airlift.' In response to this request, Hammarskjöld had simply laughed and said: 'Are you mad? Do you think I want to start an armaments race?'<sup>212</sup>

The military and the civilian branches within the ONUC administration did not always get along. This was in a way inevitable. The ONUC civilian administration had to advance with caution in the Congo, since every action taken could cause severe political consequences in the country and in the UN. As a result, all UN military activity, and the Force Commander himself, were placed under the civilian UN administration. Knowing this, and to some extent accepting the precedence of political judgments above those of the military, von Horn and the subsequent Force Commanders had to accept the role of more or less being military advisers to the UN Special Representative.<sup>213</sup> This arrangement was necessary since other administrative solutions surely would have been even worse. However, it still created problems further down the chain of command. Unable to act like an 'ordinary army commander with the advantage of a tried and tested army structure behind him', von Horn was less concerned with his own role but realized that it would put the morale of the battalions and soldiers to severe test. In the absence of civilian representation and a clear mandate in the field, this made every battalion commander, every lieutenant and every other soldier an amalgam of a UN civilian representative, a UN policeman and a UN soldier, who not infrequently had to deal with matters according to his own rationale, rather than acting according to a beforehand given order.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Carl von Horn (1966), pp. 175–176.

<sup>213</sup> Carl von Horn highlights this strained relationship and points to several specific events where political decisions made no military sense at all, pp. 131–230.

<sup>214</sup> Carl von Horn (1966), pp. 172, 219.

Writing in 1966, von Horn described the ‘anomalies [of] this strange peacekeeping role’:

It was a strange mixture of human material, an odd combination of totally different types of men which made up my command. But perhaps one of the most heartening aspects of the whole operation had been the unhesitating way in which their commanders had accepted – and seldom abused – the virtual autonomy which had been thrust on them in great stretches of isolated territory that had reverted to primitive conditions. Each individual command, whether at company or battalion level, had its own unorthodox problems amidst a welter of bitter political strife and conflicting tribal allegiances. Restoring order and saving lives had been a thankless task – even at the beginning when there had still been a veneer of goodwill towards us. But now – with a hopeless mandate which made us everybody’s enemy – our relationship with the people we had come to help was becoming corroded with bitterness. We seemed doomed to exist in a perpetual aura of hatred. And our role under conditions like these imposed a continual strain. Sooner or later, our units were bound to come to hate the task they had to carry out.<sup>215</sup>

von Horn had been physically and mentally broken by the stressful and frustrating job and was relieved of his command in December 1960. Whether the soldiers came to hate the tasks they had to carry out or not, von Horn’s personal account of the early years of operations still sheds light on the special type of service it meant to be a peacekeeper in the Congo during the early sixties, and how this differed substantially from ‘normal soldiering’.

For the Swedish battalions this became obvious in the years to come. The commander of the 12th Battalion, Jonas Wærn, complained that UN civilian officials had little or no understanding of military matters or what consequences political decisions had in the field.<sup>216</sup> For the UN military contingents, the work during the ONUC became more about reacting to

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 219. English original.

<sup>216</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 68.

events as they happened rather than acting on their own initiative. The combat situations that arose during the ONUC should therefore be seen in the light of such 'abnormal soldering' circumstances.

Also, outright combat was in no way something that characterized the day-to-day work of the Swedish battalions during the ONUC mission. In fact, it was not even by many soldiers considered the most frustrating part of their work in Elizabethville. An MPI survey conducted among veterans of the 12th Battalion upon their return to Sweden in 1962 showed that among the 386 soldiers who answered 'Yes' to the question 'Have you been involved in combat or trouble, that led to the exchange of gunfire?', only just over 100 stated that this was the most trying part of their work.<sup>217</sup> Still, combat became a major ingredient of the battalions' self-perception since it, naturally, became headline news in Sweden. In a way, it turned all other debates on Swedish participation in the ONUC into a question of 'Is it worth dying for?'

### *The battalion and communications*

The Congo crisis, as shown in the previous chapter, almost immediately became linked to the Cold War struggle. During the early 1960s it was therefore widely covered in the Swedish printed media's sections on foreign news. The obvious connection to the East–West rivalry elevated the conflict to a matter of world politics – a conflict involving Khrushchev, Kennedy and Hammarskjöld – rather than focusing on the Congo itself. Of course, the Swedish troops in the Congo also became a subject of news in Swedish media, which contributed to focusing attention on the conflict in more detail. Karin Fogelberg has observed that in the case of the TV media, the events described were filtered through those Swedes' experiences and that 'the Congolese themselves were reduced to mood-setting extras in the reports.'<sup>218</sup> This was, as we shall see, also to a large extent true for the printed

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<sup>217</sup> Walter Korpi & Ruth Nisbel, 'MPI, Specialrapport Nr. 4, maj 1962, Stridsreaktioner samt informations- och propagandaverksamhet vid ett förband under fältförhållanden. Redogörelse från en förundersökning genomförd i den XII. svenska FN-bataljonen', table 3, p.5, question 18, pp. 7–8.

<sup>218</sup> Karin Fogelberg (2004), p. 124.

media, However, the cases when those 'extras' disturbed the 'order' by shooting at and even killing the Swedish UN soldiers made it impossible for the media not to grant them some sort of special recognition, even though still often filtered through the Swedish soldiers' experiences. To better grasp the relations between the media, the military and the battalions, some introductory aspects need to be presented.

From the battalion commander's point of view, to appear in the Swedish media was important. 'For the Armed Forces', Colonel Kjellgren wrote to the Staff in Stockholm, 'the Public Relations value of having Swedish UN battalions in foreign countries is great.'<sup>219</sup> After only one month of service, the 10th Battalion had already sent six newsreels, 300 photographs and 26 travelogues back to Sweden.<sup>220</sup> Copies of Swedish newspapers circulated in the camp, and it is safe to assume that what was printed about the Swedes in the Congo in the major Swedish newspapers was read and discussed among the soldiers in Katanga. A large part of the image material that was published had been produced by the battalions' own photographers and sent to the Defence Staff and the Defence Staff's Press Service for further distribution to the media. This of course initially involved military control over what pictures were available to the Swedish media. Before long, however, most major newspapers in Sweden sent their own journalists and photographers to the Congo. Most of them were welcome to accompany the battalion in its day-to-day business. A number of foreign reporters, mainly Americans, were also allowed to write articles about the Swedish battalions.<sup>221</sup>

From the beginning of the Congo mission, the battalion faced one major problem in regard to the transmission of information back to Sweden. All information had to pass through the Force Commander's Headquarters in Leopoldville and via the Secretariat in New York before it could reach the Defence Staff in Stockholm. This of course meant that it took time for the information to reach military institutions, the government and the Swedish public. Direct communication between the Battalion headquarters and the

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<sup>219</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 6, XK, 31/5/1961, p. 22.

<sup>220</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, pp. 19–20.

<sup>221</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 3, XIK, 31/8/1961, pp. 14–15; Kongorapport nr. 4, XII, 31/9/1961, p. 30.

Army Staff or Defence Staff in Sweden was prohibited by the UN. The reason for this was that the UN soldiers were under the command of the UN Force Commander, and that national command abroad, if in direct connection with their soldiers, could challenge the chain of command and hence jeopardize the mission. At first this seems not to have been taken too seriously by the Swedes in the Congo. In October 1960, the Swedish representative to the UN, Agda Rössel, was reprimanded by Hammarskjöld:

It is reported that there have been instances of direct communication, without authorization by the UN Command, between the commanding and other senior officers ... and their respective national government departments of agencies ... <sup>222</sup>

This was in violation of the agreement made by the UN and Sweden, because 'when a contingent has been made available to the [UN] Force, all members henceforth receive their orders exclusively from the United Nations.'<sup>223</sup> The reprimand was forwarded to Colonel Kjellgren and his battalion. While fully accepting the chain of command, the delay of information still provoked irritation among the Swedish Defence Staff. Since journalists had no obligation to send their reports via the UN in New York, their stories reached Sweden well before official accounts of what had happened had been conveyed from New York. The same day as the ambush of the tenth train escort, Colonel Kjellgren personally telephoned the Defence Staff in Sweden, while the ONUC headquarters remained silent. This caused the Press Service at the Defence Staff to contact the Swedish Liaison Officer at the ONUC headquarters:

As you understand, it is most dissatisfying ... that any correspondent in Elizabethville can wire anything without [the Defence Staff] having the ability, even after the big news agencies have spread the

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<sup>222</sup> Letter from Dag Hammarskjöld to Agda Rössel, 13/10/1960, in FN-BAT XK, Sek. 1, Vol. E8, KrA.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.



news, to inspect if there is any truth in for example disparaging allegations of Swedish inactivity.<sup>224</sup>

The fact that Swedish newspapers had no trouble maintaining contact with Swedish military personnel in the Congo further angered the Defence Staff. The ONUC's inability to send correct information fast could bring disgrace to the battalion, the Swedish UN effort and the Press Service of the Armed Forces, the letter concluded. Fast and correct reports were 'necessary to keep the wild beasts at bay', here most likely referring to Swedish journalists.<sup>225</sup> Especially during the dramatic events in late 1961, this became obvious as the Swedish press accessed reports from foreign media of killed, captured, wounded or deserted Swedes in Elizabethville.<sup>226</sup> The lack of official information placed the Army Staff in a position where they were unable to confirm or deny news from the Congo until several days later. The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the Katangan regime deliberately spread misleading or false information in order to influence public opinion in the troop-contributing countries. The Swedish military, the government and eventually also the media recognized this as a kind of 'psychological warfare' directed towards Sweden.<sup>227</sup> The effects and consequences of this particular kind of warfare will be dealt with in more depth below.

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<sup>224</sup> Letter from the Press Service department of the Defence Staff to the Swedish Liaison Officer at ONUC headquarters in Leopoldville, 16/1/1961, in FN-BAT XK, Sekt. 1, Vol. E8, KrA.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Lars Ericsson Wolke (2007), pp. 112–113.

<sup>227</sup> Dagens klipp, Försvarsstabens pressavdelning, 7/10/1961, in FN-BAT XII, Sekt. 3, Vol. Ö:38, KrA; Lars Ericsson Wolke (2007), pp. 112–113; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 227–230.

## 6. Defending the train escorts

### *The first combat events, the 10th Battalion and the media responses*

Already in 1960, it had become clear for the Swedish military in the Congo that the work was not going to be 'peacetime, symbolic guard duty', but rather 'concrete duties under warlike conditions'.<sup>228</sup> On 8 November 1960, an Irish UN unit was ambushed by Baluba at Niemba, Katanga, which resulted in nine killed Irishmen and eleven dead Baluba. The incident created a huge debate in Ireland on the quality of their UN troops, and if the limited UN mandate for military action was putting the troops in unnecessary danger. The incident also reminded all UN troops operating in the Congo about the dangers of the mission. The Swedish field newspaper of the 8th Battalion printed a mostly factual article, but made sure to note that the Irishmen had been 'horribly massacred'.<sup>229</sup>

During the last month of 1960 the tension between the Baluba loyal to Lumumba and Tshombe's gendarmerie rose. In early 1961 Congolese troops had entered Katanga and were stationed in the town of Manono in the northern parts of the province. The UN feared that this could trigger the civil war in Katanga that they were there to prevent. The Katanga regime complained and Tshombe immediately demanded that the UN disarm and arrest the Lumumba troops. While negotiations with the central government in Leopoldville, as well as with Tshombe, were initiated in order to try to solve the situation using diplomacy, the UN in Katanga decided to show their presence in the northern area. The job was given to the Moroccan UN troops, but the operation did not go according to plan. Upon arrival in

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<sup>228</sup> Kongorapport nr. 2, XK, 21/1/1961, p. 36.

<sup>229</sup> *Kamelposten* (The Camel Post), nr. 26, VIII G, 12/11/1960, p.7; Katsumi Ishizuka (2005), pp. 41–42; Carl von Horn (1966), p. 212.

Manono the troops were attacked, and after half a day of hard fighting the Moroccans were evacuated from there.<sup>230</sup>

The fighting in Manono further reinforced the mistrust towards UN troops from many of the Baluba in Katanga. In a way the UN course of action had been seen as carrying out Tshombe's wishes. One particular Baluba strategy was to attack the long-distance train transports through the Katangan province. This had been shown to be an effective way of disrupting the Katangan infrastructure as well as striking terror into railway workers and other officials. Also, the trains sometimes transported Baluba prisoners. Colonel Kjellgren described this as a major problem, noting that several train drivers, conductors and even passengers had been victims of Baluba train ambushes.<sup>231</sup> At the same time, it was unwise for the UN to allow the Katangan police to escort and protect the trains. This would only further escalate the internal conflict in Katanga and create situations of direct friction between the parties. The gendarmerie was also known to deal with the Baluba uprisings in a very cruel manner, with unnecessary violence. The solution to this problem was to give the UN the responsibility of escorting the trains in Katanga, a task that was given to the Swedish battalion.<sup>232</sup> While this strategy limited confrontations between Baluba warriors and the Katangan gendarmerie, it made the UN troops even more of a potential target for the Baluba.

The Baluba mistrust of the UN presence was very apparent to the Swedish contingent during the very first of these train transports in the early days of December 1960. The Swedish 10th Battalion had by then only been in service for less than a month. While escorting fifty Baluba prisoners from Luena to Elizabethville, the train was stopped and attacked by Baluba two kilometres south of Luena. Colonel Kjellgren described the dramatic event in very objective and sober manner in his report:

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<sup>230</sup> Kongorapport nr. 2, XK, 12/1/1961, pp. 23–26.

<sup>231</sup> Kongorapport nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, pp. 1–2.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 2

The Swedish train escort returned fire and prevented attempts to enter the train. The Swedish fire was delivered with discipline, on a given order and only with the number of shots deemed necessary for the completion of the task.<sup>233</sup>

The result was that five Baluba attackers were shot dead and two mortally wounded. *Djungeltelegrafen* also refrained from depicting the incident in adventurous terms, and instead published the official press release that after the event was sent to Sweden. The press release stated that the 'heavily armed' Swedish soldiers 'forcefully returned fire', causing '5–7 dead or wounded Baluba', while no Swede had been harmed. It seems clear that the Swedish battalion tried to keep the event from becoming a sensational story for the troops to read. They could anyway talk to their comrades when they returned to get the details. In an implicit defence of the actions taken, however, *Djungeltelegrafen* pointed out that the train escort operation was of great importance, and that the determined action 'definitely should have contributed to further strengthening the confidence in, and respect for the ONU and the Swedish Congo battalion.'<sup>234</sup> Needless to say, it was the UN's and Sweden's 'confidence and respect' that was sought, not the Baluba's.

On the home front the combat was reported in Swedish newspapers. Readers were reminded that this was actually a historic event, since Swedish soldiers had been involved in combat for the first time in 146 years.<sup>235</sup> The righteousness of the Swedish action was not in any way contested; after all, the Baluba had attacked and the Swedes had been wholly justified in defending themselves. Instead, the superiority of the Swedish soldiers was pointed out. In what seems to be a tribute to their efficiency, and at the same time a reassurance of Swedish military competence to the worried reader, *Aftonbladet* wrote:

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., pp. 4–5.

<sup>234</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2. XK, 6/12/1960, p. 1.

<sup>235</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7/12/1960.

With automatic fire Swedish soldiers repulsed an attack by yelling Congolese equipped with old, outdated blunderbusses.<sup>236</sup>

The attacking Baluba had been equipped with a few outdated muskets, but mainly with bows and arrows, spears and clubs, trying to board the train against the will of the heavily armed escort in what must have been a hopeless attempt to free the prisoners. This did not stop *Aftonbladet* from, in what seems like a moment of national pride, describing how '[t]he attacking natives were mowed down like grass before the scythe by the Swedes' devastating hails of fire'.<sup>237</sup>

About a month later, in January 1961, the scenario was repeated. During the tenth escort mission the train was again attacked. Like the first time, Baluba stopped and attacked the train, but now three Swedes were wounded in the ambush. During the journey from Elizabethville the escort had had to make several repairs to the track. In the obvious presence of Baluba activity, the decision to reinforce the train escort was made. On 15 January, when the train was nearing the small town of Bukama, the company, now 110 men strong, dispatched a reconnaissance unit on a trolley to go ahead and scout the way. About one kilometre from Bukama the unit was ambushed and came under heavy fire. Several bullets hit two Swedish soldiers but neither of them was mortally wounded. A gendarmerie captain (in civilian clothing) who had accompanied the unit was killed, however. During the ensuing combat another Swedish soldier was wounded, but the attack was repulsed. The Baluba continued to attack the train over the following days but, again, unsuccessfully. No one counted the exact number of Baluba casualties during the attacks, but Kjellgren noted that they had been heavy.<sup>238</sup>

The dramatic events experienced by the tenth escort and the wounded soldiers became big news in Sweden. All three studied daily newspapers included rich pictorial material, provided by the military, showing Swedish soldiers at the scene of the combat. Just as in the case of the violent first

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<sup>236</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 5/12/1960.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 2, XK, 15/12/1960, pp. 26–29; See also Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 74–75.

encounter in late 1960, the fighting in January was labelled 'historic' from a Swedish point of view. Never in 146 years had a Swedish soldier been wounded in combat.<sup>239</sup>

The newspaper articles written in the immediate days following the combat were packaged in an aura of warfare. The story of 'the combat' given to the Swedish public had all the ingredients needed for a classic war adventure. They included the foreign, dangerous land where the 'insidiously devious and invisible enemy' could plan a 'well-disguised ambush in the jungle',<sup>240</sup> as well as an aggressive enemy, the use of heavy weapons, and mounting casualties on both sides. 'Their [the Baluba warriors'] lust for battle is great, they attacked ... over and over again, even though the Swedish automatic fire caused severe losses, dead and wounded', *Dagens Nyheter* wrote.<sup>241</sup> As in the case of the first attack, little more than a month earlier, the Swedes' military superiority in the field was embedded in the story by the mention of heavy weapons and their enemy's inability to cause them serious harm. Still, it was described as dangerous. The story unfolded as the unit was under siege in Luena, and no one could at that time know that there would be no more large-scale attacks on it. The Baluba *could* come again in greater numbers, they could have acquired modern weapons, and they *had* wounded three Swedish soldiers and killed another passenger on the train.

The many photos published some days after the attack were taken by the battalion's own photographer and forwarded to the media by the Defence Staff's Press Service. The battalion sent three rolls of film to Sweden.<sup>242</sup> It has been suggested, though not extensively researched, that media photography has an impact on public opinion far greater than the printed word.<sup>243</sup> This study is not orientated towards detailed image analysis, but an important piece of the puzzle would be missed without some attention being given to this rich material. Kari Andén-Papadopoulos has analysed the Swedish printed media's use of images from the Vietnam War. She points to the fact that images are not a presentation of the truth, but should be treated

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<sup>239</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 21/1/1961. (As a part of the regular armed forces).

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 18/1/1961.

<sup>242</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 2, XK, 15/12/1960, p. 17.

<sup>243</sup> Kari Andén-Papadopoulos (2000), p 31.

as the historical artefacts they really are. 'They carry an abundance of information, not of any objective reality but rather of the collective dreams, fantasies and ideas, of the anxiety and fascination that exists (or existed) within the culture that produced it.'<sup>244</sup>

The media presented mainly three sorts of images after the attack on the tenth train escort. The first sets of pictures showed soldiers taking cover by the tracks or crouching behind the train ready to meet the next attack. The pictures were obviously taken as preparations were being made to face another attack, and were often shot from behind with soldiers unaware of the camera. Also shown were pictures of the wounded soldiers as they were taken care of immediately after being shot. The two types of images created a feeling of authenticity, as the soldiers were not posing for the photographer. They also underlined the presence of danger and anticipation, which in a way left the viewer with the question 'What will happen next?'. Lifted from their context, and except for the clearly visible UN emblem on the helmets, the images could have come from almost any contemporaneous war scene. A third set of pictures presented soldiers obviously posing for the photographer. These showed calm but focused faces. They seemed in control and ready for anything. In combination with the other pictures and the text in the news articles, an overall message was conveyed about the severity of the situation, but at the same time about the confidence in, and military competence of, the Swedish soldiers.

No pictures, however, showed any Baluba. At the time of the attack on the train escort the media had to rely on images provided by the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff. It seems unlikely that they, in the case of such images existing, would have provided them to the Swedish media. Since the Baluba posed no threat to Sweden, images of killed Baluba would be counterproductive in the effort to gain support from the public. This point will be further elaborated on below.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



Image 5. Swedish UN soldiers taking care of a wounded comrade. Note the two guarding soldiers in the background. (*Dagens Nyheter*, 21/1/1961)

On the political level, none of the studied newspapers suggested a withdrawal of troops from the Congo as a consequence of the events. On the contrary, they supported the continuation of the mission. Situations like this were just what one should expect along the way, *Dagens Nyheter* wrote on the subject on 16 January:

It has been clear since the first Swedish UN battalion was deployed in the Congo in July, that service there is of a completely different type than what earlier Swedish units became familiar with ...<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 16/1/1961.





Image 6. The text reads: "Major Eric Bonde was lightly wounded in the ambush. After given first aid he returned to the fight against the invisible enemy in the jungle bush." (*Aftonbladet*, 21/1/1961)

The paper further noted that even though the Swedes were by far superior to the Baluba in matters of weaponry and other equipment, the Baluba were by no means unable to cause Swedish troop casualties. The Niemba incident was still fresh evidence of that. Swedish soldiers had, through accidents, been injured or lost their lives in UN service earlier, but 'one must however', the paper continued, 'expect that casualties through direct combat in a special way would upset the Swedish people, and a strong reaction is of course not unnatural with a people for which such experiences fortunately

are unknown of.’<sup>246</sup> It was therefore time to remind readers of the fact that it was in the line of that duty the soldiers were put at risk; that they were executing important work; that they had all volunteered, and that every demand that they should be withdrawn would be met by disapproval from them. *Aftonbladet* also shared this view: ‘The military UN effort claims its victims. The Swedish volunteers ... have surely been aware of that.’<sup>247</sup> A re-established Congo, the paper continued, required its inhabitants to settle their differences, something the UN civil and military involvement alone could not accomplish. ‘Only to have, for half a year, prevented the total collapse and the total catastrophe are good enough. The UN effort is worth its price.’<sup>248</sup>

The general admiration and appreciation in the media for the soldiers and their work in early 1961 was of course welcomed in the camp. The battalion headquarters wrote to the Defence Staff and the Army Staff in Stockholm, pointing out that the widespread publication of images from the ‘intermezzo’ had been delightful to see and that it must have had had a ‘knock-out effect’ on readers.<sup>249</sup> The battalions were also active in sending stories, photos and news back to Sweden. From the beginning of the 10th Battalion’s Congo service, the soldiers were encouraged to write letters to their local newspapers as well as to their relatives. To reassure loved ones that the mission was exciting and that everything was just fine would surely be very welcomed at home, *Djungeltelegrafen* argued. The battalion commander, Colonel Kjellgren, was on several occasions on Swedish radio, speaking about the battalion and its tasks. On Christmas Eve 1960, listeners could hear him assure them that their compatriots had ‘through their behaviour on, as well as off, duty ... gained a good reputation. We appear to enjoy [the] respect and confidence [of the Congolese].’ His speech was also published in *Djungeltelegrafen*.<sup>250</sup> At the same time the Battalion HQ reviewed all letters before they were sent to Sweden, and the soldiers were

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 16/1/1961.

<sup>247</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 16/1/1961.

<sup>248</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 16/1/1961.

<sup>249</sup> ‘Cable telegram from Bat. XII HQ to Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff, Stockholm’, 27/1/1961, UD HP48:Kongo.

<sup>250</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XK, 20/12/1960, p. 2.

prohibited from talking to journalists without a commanding officer present. This was in order to hinder soldiers from overdramatizing events or accidentally revealing military tactical issues.<sup>251</sup>

Even though there were few critical voices in the media and public opinion in early 1961, some articles did describe the Swedish soldiers in, what appeared to them, an unfavourable way. One such article appeared in the popular weekly magazine *SE* in March 1961. *SE* had sent a journalist and photographer to Elizabethville to meet the battalion. The visit went well and they had many opportunities to observe the day-to-day activity of the battalion and talk to the soldiers. The articles published about the visit were, however, unlike anything in the morning papers. Instead of giving credit to the battalion's efforts in preventing civil war, *SE* focused on the fact that the soldiers had killed human beings.

'You have killed people!' I let the words drop among the boys of the second UN company, who fought at Luena ... . The Swedish soldiers who have killed people look seriously at me. Death has marked them. It would be futile to deny it. Faces have got sharper lines, eyes a deeper gaze, boys have become men, the inexperienced knowing. They have killed.<sup>252</sup>

*SE* also got soldiers to talk about the combat at Luena in a way that at this time was not recognizable in the media generally. A sergeant gave a short account of his experience there:

I shot five Baluba. One of them the stood against a termite mound. They often do. He jerked when the first shot hit him. At the second he fell.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 1, XK, 29/11/1960, p.7; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XK, 6/12/1960, p.3; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 5, XK, 28/12/1960, p.8.

<sup>252</sup> *SE*, nr. 9, 2/3/1961, p. 14.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The story that unfolded through the article in *SE* is that of young, inexperienced Swedish battalion members who went to the Congo to work for the good cause of peace in the name of the United Nations, but found themselves in the midst of a war zone with military tension escalating by the hour. 'They came', *SE* wrote, 'with a naive belief in the UN and the grand task of peace.' Now, in the face of danger, they had risen to the challenge. However, the job they had to do came with a price: an involuntary experience of what combat really was, an experience that left the 'mark of death':

They have killed people, seen faces explode in blood by close-up shots by pistol, thrown hand grenades down trenches, seen wounded limp away through the high grass, aimed at them and fired the shot.<sup>254</sup>

While capturing the close-up horrors of combat in descriptions like this, *SE* did not criticize the mission itself or how the soldiers dealt with the dangers they found themselves in. In fact, they referred to the above-mentioned sergeant as 'the hero from Luena'. Combat was not something the soldiers had wanted to experience and it was not something they as a battalion or as part of the UN forces had initiated. But if it were to happen again, the battalion would fight and any enemy would regret their attack, *SE* maintained.

The article is in a way an example of classic sensationalist journalism not at all uncommon for *SE*. The magazine was normally filled with dramatic photos and stories accompanied by even more dramatic headlines. Still, the story was unique in that it dealt with a contemporary war drama involving regular Swedish soldiers in combat. As such it had a potential to have a far more serious impact on the public. In Sweden, relatives and friends of the soldiers could be counted in the thousands and the government was, of

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

course, also aware of the importance of public opinion for continued support of the mission.

*SE* furthermore contributed to spreading anxiety by adding to the image of a possible escalation of the conflict. Another article in the same edition of the magazine dealt with Tshombe, his government and his gendarmerie. Fronted by a large picture of him with the caption 'I'm at war with your soldiers from Sweden', *SE* presented a short interview with the Katangan president. The article described him as an arrogant, overconfident warmonger. He was clearly the enemy personified. 'Last week', *SE* wrote,

he declared war on the UN. Katanga will not obey the Security Council: Katanga will not demobilize: It arms itself ... puts guns in the hands of trash from all over the world.<sup>255</sup>

*SE* had drawn a scenario where all was set for a big clash between the Katangan gendarmerie and the UN, and more specifically between the mercenaries and the Swedes. Almost like a build-up for a great sports event, the two concluding statements from each 'team':

The Katangan mercenary:

The Swedes cannot fight. They are too weak, too spoiled. God have mercy on them if they have to face us...

The Swedish Captain:

And I will tell you that I'm sorry if they attack us [since we will have to kill them]. The boys aim their fire now – and they know how to shoot. Trust us.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p.11. The 'trash' was a reference to the many mercenaries employed by the Katangan regime.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 15.

Even though the articles described a possible scenario which later that year turned out to become more or less reality, the battalion commander and his staff did not appreciate *SE*'s rhetoric. 'The untrustworthy story published by *SE* after their visit to Elizabethville, induced much indignation within the battalion', Kjellgren wrote in his monthly report.<sup>257</sup> He and a handful of other officers wrote a long and angry reply to the magazine, which was both printed and answered. The criticism directed at *SE*'s article from Kjellgren and others is interesting in itself. Besides pointing out several factual errors concerning the military, like the incorrect use of the term 'heavily armed', they complained about *SE*'s smearing of Tshombe. Not because it was necessarily untrue, but rather that it could offend him and thereby make the task in the Congo even harder and more dangerous for the battalion. Furthermore, the language in *SE*'s articles was far too gruesome and 'blood-curdling' to be taken seriously, and the assertion that the soldiers' appearances had changed was simply untrue, according to the reply. 'How can *SE*'s journalists claim that "faces have got sharper lines"?' Was this based on 'comparative face analysis?', or was it, more likely, just made up?<sup>258</sup>

The overall trend in the printed media immediately after and in the months that followed the attack on the train escort was, however, in general a portrayal of Swedish military efficiency. Terms like 'war', 'combat' and 'enemy' were not uncommon, even though it was the UN or Swedish UN soldiers rather than Sweden that were at war or had enemies. The media did not hesitate, however, to put Swedish labels on what were considered desirable traits, such as courage, stamina, dutifulness and military efficiency. Neither were there any problems comparing what had happened at Luena with Sweden's latest war with Norway – some 150 years earlier. The horror of trained and well-equipped Swedish soldiers mowing down the often young boys armed with bows and arrows and spears did not become a theme in the Swedish newspapers, other than to further assure readers of their soldiers' superiority in the field. It is also notable that the portrayed enemy during the spring of 1961 changed from the Baluba warriors to the Katangan gendarmerie, of which the latter was labelled a far more dangerous enemy to face, not least because of its use of European mercenaries.

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<sup>257</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XK, 10/4/1961, p. 32.

<sup>258</sup> *SE*, nr. 12, 23/3/1961, pp. 9–10.

### *The Baluba 'enemy'*

The Baluba have so far only been seen as part of the story about the attacks on the train escorts. It would be impossible to further examine the theme of Swedish peacekeeping in the Congo without paying more attention to the Baluba as a significant 'other' at this time. A few questions immediately appear: Who were they? Where did they come from? Can we speak of them as a unified tribe or people with a common political goal in the 1960s, or were they local communities just labelled 'the Baluba tribe' by outside observers? Why did they oppose the Katangan government or attack UN soldiers? While the cultural history of the Baluba lies beyond the scope of this study, it is still important to acknowledge that they quickly became a significant 'other' affecting the identity construction of the battalion, as well as entering as a part of the contemporaneous Swedish narrative of the ONUC mission.

The Baluba–Swedish interaction in Congo was complex. The word 'Baluba' itself altered its connotation depending on time and place. As already seen, it was in early 1961 almost synonymous with 'the enemy', at least in the Swedish media. At the same time it symbolized the resistance against Tshombe and the Katangan gendarmerie, and soon, as we shall see in the next 'phase', became increasingly connected with the many victims of the Congo violence.

Here the focus has been placed on the Baluba as the supposed enemy in the initial phase of the mission, under the theme of war and conflict. It is also essential to bear in mind that it is the Swedish perception of the Baluba that is the object of study here, not the Baluba themselves. The interaction with the Baluba, or rather parts or groups of them as separate from the theme of combat or war, will be further explored in the next chapter.

It is incorrect to speak of the Baluba as a politically unified group or as a people. Rather, they comprised many different tribes scattered over large parts of the Congo and neighbouring countries. Those in mainly northern and western Katanga opposed Tshombe's plans for a united and independent Katanga through their party, the Balubakat. It had gained 23 of the 60 seats in the Katanga Provincial Assembly, only two seats less than Tshombe's Conakat party. Protesting against the Belgian pro-Tshombe involvement in the election, the Balubakat boycotted the Assembly from the very beginning in an effort to stop Tshombe from forming a government.

Tshombe, however, did so anyway, and the Balubakat declared their open rebellion against the Katangan government, which they considered to be a Belgian puppet regime. Their common political goal with the central government made them loyal to Lumumba and enemies of the Katangan gendarmerie.<sup>259</sup>

The description of the Baluba enemy by the Swedish media, as well as the battalion newspaper, fits well with a post-colonial viewpoint. The hierarchy was very clear. The Baluba were portrayed as representing 'wild Africa' and tribal rivalry. As seen above, they seemed to be all the things the Swedes were not. They were black, wild, sneaky, aggressive, irrational and militarily incompetent. Applying the overall rationale of the ONUC mission, the Balubas' motive for attacking the train escorts could not be properly explained. The Swedish media as outside observers had obvious problems in relating the Baluba attacks to the grand story of helping the Congo to achieve peace and political stability. As a consequence, the idea of the Baluba as irrational became further reinforced. *Dagens Nyheter* explained what had happened in terms of unfortunate circumstances. Since the UN had remained neutral while entering Katanga, the Baluba had felt betrayed, the paper argued. When troops loyal to Lumumba had entered the northern parts of Katanga and joined forces with Baluba in the area, UN troops had found themselves in the midst of escalating violence:

[T]he UN forces – that of course had not had as [their] mission to stop the invasion, but to protect the white inhabitants – soon got involved in armed confrontations ...<sup>260</sup>

In the opinion of *Dagens Nyheter*, to protect the white inhabitants from the Baluba offensive was simply an act of neutrality and could not be considered as something aimed at ending the invasion. The article effectively excluded all black inhabitants in Katanga as possible victims worth protecting, hence including them all as in one way or another part of the 'tribal chaos' there.

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<sup>259</sup> Kwame Nkrumah (1967), pp. 67, 172.

<sup>260</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 16/1/1961.



The battalion had, however, a more detailed and complex view of the Baluba than the Swedish media. Since the Niemba incident and before the attacks along the railway, the Swedish 10th Battalion had closely followed reports on the Baluba, their whereabouts, equipment and tactics, in case they had to face them in combat.<sup>261</sup> In the very first report sent to the Defence Staff, Colonel Kjellgren had identified the Baluba as a problem. He also added a special appendix to his second report, in which he further elaborated his thoughts. The main problem, from the battalion's point of view, was that many of the Baluba tribes were fierce opponents to Tshombe. This had led to clashes between them and the gendarmerie, which the UN had to try to prevent. This would be a hard task. 'Even in Elizabethville it is estimated that 25 per cent of the native population is made up of Baluba hostile to Tshombe', Kjellgren wrote.<sup>262</sup> 'It should be noted', he continued, that 'even within the Baluba there are different factions, or more correctly, tribes, that are in opposition to each other and do not hesitate to battle.'<sup>263</sup> Especially troublesome, and the core of the Baluba violent revolt, was the Baluba 'youth movement', the jeunesse, who, according to the report, bore 'similarities with the Swedish hot-rodders' in their violent behaviour and mistrust of any form of authority:<sup>264</sup>

Their revolt is aimed at most things – against society, against the whites, against parents and tribal chiefs, against the authorities, that for the Baluba is embodied in the, by Belgian officers led, gendarmerie, as well as against all their own or adjacent tribes that support or accept the Tshombe regime. ... The Baluba youths' activity [has] been strongly influenced by primitivism, magic and spells and by the crudest brutality, featuring cannibalism. ... Everything about them is however not primitive fanaticism. There are motives for their actions. With these angry young men there is present not only an unforgiving hatred against all authority, but also a real fear of the Katangan gendarmerie. There should be no doubt

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<sup>261</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, pp. 1–2.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., App. II, p. 3.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., App. II, p. 4.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

that this fear is justified, based on the brutality of the gendarmerie's raids on the Baluba villages.<sup>265</sup>

The Baluba youth were presented with a combination of attributes. On the one hand, as in the Swedish media, they were described as a primitive, half-bewildered tribe, even cannibals, with no ability for reason or temperateness. On the other hand, they were given the attribute of a rebellious youth movement that tried to guard their interests in the midst of the political chaos. Either way, they were treated as very violent and self-sacrificing. The attacks so far, by the Baluba on the UN troops, therefore, at least to some extent, were seen as simple acts of mistaken identity. The UN troops could be hard to recognize, Kjellgren noted, and especially the black UN units commanded by white officers bore similarities with the gendarmerie. In general, the battalion commander reported, the Baluba had no political motive for attacking UN patrols.<sup>266</sup> The report also included some military observations that would be of use in preparing for an eventual confrontation with the Baluba. It depicted the typical Baluba warrior as a young man armed with a bow together with poisonous arrows, a club with attached bicycle chains, or perhaps an old front-loaded rifle. He wore a shirt and trousers, 'often dirty and ragged' and a leopard skin around the waist. Usually his group attacked in large numbers from hidden positions. Before the ambush they used strong drugs that made them believe they were immortal. During this frenzy they were described as immune to reasoning, even from their own leaders.<sup>267</sup> These descriptions of the Baluba and the jeunesse, which were sent to the Swedish Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff, were also published in *Djungeltelegrafen*, in November, for the Swedish soldiers to read.<sup>268</sup> Left out were the observed tactics and weaponry used by the jeunesse and their similarities with hot-rodders, but included were the parts about magic and cannibalism. The Baluba, and the Baluba jeunesse in particular, from a tactical military point of view were described as half-bewildered men whose ability to pose a military threat consisted of their sheer numbers and

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<sup>265</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 2, XK, 21/1/1961, pp. 5–6.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>267</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, App. II, pp. 1–2.

<sup>268</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 7, XK, 11/1/1961, pp. 8–9.

drug-boosted courage. From a political point of view, the image was somewhat more balanced. *Djungeltelegraf* wrote:

[r]evolt is a part of youthhood. It is a human phenomenon – in its most common shape a ‘puberty difficulty’ of passing nature – that not infrequently takes on political shape.

In country after country – Korea, Japan, Turkey – we have, in recent years, noted that it was students and youths who raised the banner of revolt against the present order. This is also the case with the Baluba tribe.<sup>269</sup>

This placed the Baluba uprising in a larger framework of rebellious youth movements. As such it was not unique, but well known from other situations. Turbulent times almost always created angry youth movements, it was argued, and the situation in the Congo and Katanga could without doubt be called turbulent. The description of the Congo as a country in transition from old to modern, from colony to independent, and on its way to political unification, is a theme further explored in Chapter 9, but it should be noted that the ‘Baluba problem’ fitted well into that theme. Both the report and the paper concluded by arguing that the revolt was not mainly political, ‘but [caused by] maladjustment to time, perhaps rather growing pains in the transition from tribal life and traditions ... to a wider solidarity with society.’<sup>270</sup>

Looking at the Baluba from a military perspective, it safe to say that they did not qualify as an enemy in a classic sense, and certainly not the enemy the Swedish armed forces had been trained to expect. They posed no wider military threat towards the Swedish contingent and no threat at all to Sweden and its citizens back home. Hence, even though they shot and wounded Swedish soldiers, it became impossible to explicitly ‘hate’ them in official rhetoric. Unlike in a classic, extensive intra-state war, to kill the enemy here was not a good thing; it was an unwelcomed act of self-defence.

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., pp. 8–9.

<sup>270</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 2, XK, 21/1/1961, p. 7; *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 7, XK, 11/1/1961, p. 9.

In his reports or *Djungeltelegrafen*, Kjellgren did not in fact use the term 'enemy' when referring to the Baluba. In the rhetoric of the battalion, the Baluba were therefore also inferior in the sense that they did not understand that the UN and themselves had a common political goal: the unification of the Congo. Attacking the UN train escorts was treated as a tragic mistake that unavoidably would cost lives, mostly Baluba ones. The logical thing to do in this situation was to tell the Baluba just that, and this was also what Kjellgren did.<sup>271</sup>

At the same time, few tears were shed in relation to the Baluba killed in the attacks. Here, the case was clear, they had attacked and in the end had themselves to blame. They might have been misled victims of the political chaos in Katanga, but in the local scene of the battle it was a matter of kill or be killed. The defensiveness of the Swedish action on the microscale of the combat also made it possible for the battalion to be proud of what its soldiers had done. On a collective level, the actual killing of Baluba attackers could simply be left out when dealing with the incident. Instead, the focus was on the performance of the Swedish train unit under fire. In this respect the soldiers had, according to Kjellgren's report, behaved 'perfectly'. 'All of them acted with calmness and composure and all orders were followed to the letter.' Some of them, based on their unselfish actions while protecting their comrades, had even qualified to be decorated, Kjellgren argued to the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff, a point also made in *Djungeltelegrafen*.<sup>272</sup> Also, in a comment to *Svenska Dagbladet*, Kjellgren pointed out: 'we really have reasons to be proud of this unit.'<sup>273</sup>

### *Political concerns in early 1961*

The first military engagements in the Congo in late 1960 and early 1961, closely monitored and dramatized by Swedish media, also raised political

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<sup>271</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 3, XK, 27/2/1961, pp. 19–21.

<sup>272</sup> 'Utredning angående utomordentliga insatser i samband med tåg-eskorten till Luena i mitten av januari 1961 i och för erhållande av eventuella utmärkelser', found attached to Kongorapport, nr. 3, XK, 27/2/1961; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 12, XK, 15/2/1961, p. 7.

<sup>273</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 20/1/1961.

concerns in Sweden. On 24 January, Undén was urged to comment specifically on events in the Congo before parliament.<sup>274</sup> As in 1960, Undén focused on the legality and necessity of the operation in a wider sense. By recalling the situation in the summer of 1960, he reminded parliament of the unanimous decision taken by the Security Council to sanction what undoubtedly had been a Congolese request for assistance. Undén further stressed the importance of the mission within the Cold War drama. The removal of troops could lead to severe consequences, as this would not only leave the way clear for full-scale civil war but also for superpower intervention:

If such interventions occur, we would, as Hammarskjöld several times has pointed out, end up with a new Spanish Civil War or a new Korea. The presence of the UN troops has so far prevented intervention from other powers.<sup>275</sup>

As had been the case in the decision to send troops in the first place, the government stuck with the arguments of duty and Cold War tension. In Undén's view, the Swedish soldiers were part of the international effort, and must therefore remain in the Congo as long as requested by the UN. Not to do so would be the same as recognizing defeat and failure. Still, there were some slight differences in the official political rhetoric by early 1961 as compared to 1960. Perhaps most significantly, the prevention of a Congolese civil war, and the humanitarian consequences that would follow as a result of withdrawal, were played down. 'Perhaps', Undén said, 'in some places the opinion exists, as things stand today, that it would be for the best to leave the Congo to its own matters, even if the result would be violent civil feuds.'<sup>276</sup> Instead, as seen in the quote above, the prevention of foreign power intervention was put forward as a prime motive for enduring the

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<sup>274</sup> 'Anförande av utrikesminister Undén den 24 januari i riksdagens första kammare', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), pp. 49–52.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

current hardships in the Congo. This was, of course, an argument that could be directly related to a matter of Swedish national security and was as valid in 1961 as it had been in 1960. Secondly, while Undén retained his opinion that the mission therefore *must* go on, there was still doubt about if, in the longer run, the operation *could* go on. If, Undén noted, the UN's credibility continued to be undermined by internal political struggle within the organization and UN troops continued to be involved in combat, there would be little to accomplish in the Congo. Thus Undén conceived the possibility of a Swedish withdrawal in the case of a general operational breakdown or if other significant troop contributors were to leave.<sup>277</sup> The Swedish participation, from Undén's point of view, was placed well inside the UN effort in general. In other words, if Sweden as a nation failed to accomplish its mission in the Congo, it would do so as part of a larger UN failure.

Undén's and the government's course of action was also endorsed by the right-wing press. *Svenska Dagbladet* repeated Undén's position regarding the severe consequences that would follow a withdrawal, and stated that '[a] majority of the Swedish opinion ought to share the understanding that Foreign Minister Undén presented before parliament ...'<sup>278</sup>

While there were matters of concern, there was no real political opposition to a continuation of the mission in early 1961. Shortly after Undén's address in parliament, the government and the Foreign Committee decided to send a new battalion to the Congo to replace the current one. Undén noted in his diary: 'Foreign Committee: No difference of opinion.'<sup>279</sup>

In a wider sense the Congo crisis placed the UN itself in an exposed position. Scepticism towards the UN's ability to efficiently respond to the international crisis was raised in international media and political forums, including the UN itself. The Soviets' verbal attacks on Hammarskjöld and their refusal to further support the ONUC had exposed the inherent weaknesses in the UN system. The Swedish government's defence of action

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<sup>277</sup> This viewpoint was also presented in the press immediately after the first combat. See *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9/12/1960.

<sup>278</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 25/1/1961.

<sup>279</sup> Karl Molin (ed.) (2002), p. 628.

taken in the Congo hence became closely related to the defence of the organization and its authority to act on the international stage in general. As seen in the previous chapter, Swedish national security was closely linked with the upholding of a strong United Nations. In April, during the foreign debate in parliament, the government explained its view on international politics, also defining Sweden's role within them. Fears of the consequences of Cold War tension were explicitly stated:

We are aware that crises even in what seem to be peripheral parts of the world can create threats of further conflicts and affect our own security. ... Some states or some parties within the states become ... identified as supporters of one or the other bloc ... The small peoples risk becoming objects of Great Power politics.<sup>280</sup>

The 'small peoples' did not, however, include Sweden, which had, according to the speaker (probably Undén or Erlander), a relatively independent role to play in international politics. The speech further included what could almost be described as a formula to avoid becoming an object of, or target for, superpower politics. The four most important parts of this formula were the self-proclaimed neutrality policy; the large military power; the domestic political and social stability; and the active involvement in international organizations, most notably the United Nations. These needed to be upheld in order to keep Sweden out of harmful involvement in the Cold War. The first three were more within the control of Swedish government and society than the fourth, which to a large extent was dependent on other states' willingness to cooperate. In other words, creating international trust in the UN as a true *one-world* organization was a matter of national security. Such a standpoint did not allow Sweden to undermine the UN. To withdraw troops from the Congo in the spring of 1961 would undoubtedly have done so.

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<sup>280</sup> 'Regeringsanförande i riksdagens utrikesdebatt den 19 april', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p.11 Probably given by Erlander or Undén.

*Political orientation, motive construction and duty*

*Djungeltelegrafen* quickly became a major source for conveying information and news to the battalion. It was produced by the Battalion HQ and had a wide circulation among the soldiers.<sup>281</sup> Being the battalion's field newspaper it had some obvious restrictions. It could not print anything that could be considered damaging to the UN's operation in the Congo or to the Swedish battalions' work within the ONUC. Still, it had to work in the interest of forming camaraderie within the battalions and therefore contained articles that the soldiers would read and, it was felt, should know about. The soldiers had, of course, access to other printed media, but *Djungeltelegrafen* had a deeper insight into what the news in those papers actually meant to the battalions. Being produced for Swedish soldiers in the Congo by Swedish soldiers there, it carried a authority that other media sources lacked. Even though every soldier brought with him, or on the spot created his own motives for what he was doing in the Congo, the collective answers to questions about motivation or self-perception could not be left solely to the Swedish government, the UN or the media. This made *Djungeltelegrafen* important, sometimes as a mediator between the soldiers and their political employers. The paper was by definition partial and took little notice of criticism aimed at the Swedish battalions, except for occasionally taking issue with what were thought of as unjustified attacks. In cases where the Battalion HQ took action against soldiers, for instance punishing them for disciplinary offences, the paper was silent. Such news would be bad for morale. Nevertheless, *Djungeltelegrafen* offers an insight into the forming of the collective self-perception of the battalion. Within the theme of war and combat, it is therefore interesting to examine if and how motives for the battalions' participation were presented.

Focusing now on the first phase and the duration of the 10th Battalion's stay in the Congo, Colonel Kjellgren made use of the paper from the beginning. When the 10th Battalion relieved the 8th Battalion in

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<sup>281</sup> The editor of the 10th Battalion's *Djungeltelegrafen* noted that the Swedish battalion was the only one in the Congo with its own newspaper. 'In fact', he wrote in 1964, 'there is no UN soldier more well-informed than the Swedish ...' See Hans Carsborg (1964), pp. 94–95.



Elizabethville, in November 1960, he addressed his soldiers on the front page of the very first edition of *Djungeltelegrafen*:

By a firm and decisive but yet kind appearance, we will make ourselves respected. The personal appearance on, as well as off, duty, is of the uttermost importance. Every man must be aware of the fact that he represents Sweden in a foreign country, where critical eyes are upon us. It is a great responsibility.<sup>282</sup>

By 'off duty' Kjellgren meant soldiers on short leave outside the camp, perhaps visiting restaurants or just sightseeing.<sup>283</sup> Personal behaviour was important, since bad conduct or appearance would reflect badly on Sweden. This was a call not only for the soldiers to behave well as workers, but also as tourists. Being 'off duty' did not mean they did not represent Sweden.

To be workers or tourists, however, did not exclude the soldiers from also being just soldiers. In late November, Kjellgren held a reception in his house to honour the Swedish warrior king Karl XII, who died in 1718. Local authorities, police and the Katangan Minister of the Interior, Godefroid Munongo, were present. The official UN representative in the Congo, Ian Berendsen, and several officers from the UN Chiefs of Staff in Leopoldville, represented the UN. Kjellgren noted in his report that the event had been successful in creating new contacts in the Congo and added that '[t]he Swedish battalion is probably the one UN unit that is considered to be the most respected and trustworthy.'<sup>284</sup> During the commemoration of Karl XII, Kjellgren also took the opportunity to address his soldiers, comparing them and those who had served that king, the Caroleans. The speech was printed in *Djungeltelegrafen*.

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<sup>282</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 1, XK, 29/11/1960, p. 1.

<sup>283</sup> The use of 'duty' here refers to 'in service' or 'at work', rather than meaning 'obligation'.

<sup>284</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XK, 15/12/1960, pp. 21–22. Kjellgren also noted that many of the guests thought Karl XII was the present king of Sweden.

Swedish soldiers! November 30 today – the day Karl XII died – is different from other November 30-days most of us have experienced. But still, there are many similarities between us and the Caroleans.

Like the Caroleans, who fought a, in numbers, far superior enemy deep inside the Russian country, stand today a small group of Swedes in a foreign land, with a great task before them. ... The Caroleans went to work without counting the numbers among themselves or the enemy. ... If they had succeeded, perhaps the world would look different today. ... We have an easier task than the Caroleans. We are members of, and supported by, an international organization. We can better resist the challenges of the foreign climate. We are by far the best-equipped unit in this country. ... Our unit has made a great impression on both local inhabitants and other troop units. We already enjoy great trust. ... Let us continue this way. Let it be our goal that – in the same way as the memory of the Caroleans' lives – the memory, in this land, of our battalion, as the best unit that ever existed – before or later, shall live.

In connection [with this], let us in particular note the extraordinary importance of personal behaviour. Each one of us represents Sweden. A good and kind act will be of advantage to our country, the UN and the peace. A bad act or ... thoughtlessness, committed by any one of us, affects us all, our reputation, hurts our country, the UN and limits the possibilities to do our job. ...

The Caroleans served their country, their king and the cause they believed in. Let us do the same. ...<sup>285</sup>

The speech captured many interesting aspects simultaneously; firstly, the difference between fighting a war and peacekeeping. On the one hand, by referring to the well-established image of the competent and dutiful Carolean soldier of the early 18th century, Kjellgren clearly identified the battalion members as being of the same (Swedish) stock: just as capable of fighting if necessary. On the other hand, the speech underlined the mission of peace and UN membership. According to Kjellgren, there was no contradiction in being a proud Swedish soldier under UN command.

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<sup>285</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 2, XK, 6/12/1960, p. 2.

However, as soldiers, they were primarily Swedish. The three ingredients of loyalty to Sweden, in the service of the UN, and being on a peace mission were presented in that order. The comparison with the Caroleans might seem strange, in that these belonged to a warring army that fought bloody battles in Russia and eventually lost. Likewise, this occurred some 250 years before Kjellgren's speech. The national narrative of the Caroleans as the finest and most capable of European armies, well known and feared in their time, most likely explains the comparison. Also, that there in fact existed (and in some circles still exists) a tradition of commemorating the death of Karl XII created an obvious opportunity for comparison.

The soldier identity was never threatened. Being a peacekeeper simply meant being a Swedish soldier on a UN mission. *Djungeltelegrafen* in general referred to the Swedish soldiers as 'UN Swedes', but also on several occasions as 'Congo warriors', 'Blue-yellow soldiers' or similar combinations, and sometimes even likened them to the Vikings. Such epithets were not necessarily applied when describing typical military work or dramatic events, but were used in all kinds of other articles.<sup>286</sup> Traditional soldierly behaviour was encouraged. One example was the flag that soldiers of the Third Company of the 10th Battalion made for themselves. It was white with a blue shield containing three yellow crowns. In reference to old military tradition, the shield was encircled by the names of the company's 'battlefields'. This initiative was welcomed by *Djungeltelegrafen*, which called it 'a nice novelty' that undoubtedly should be encouraged within the battalion. The tradition continued in later battalions, and *Djungeltelegrafen* commented on the convenience of the blue colour, representing, as it did, both Sweden and the UN.<sup>287</sup>

*Djungeltelegrafen* never directly referred to the attacks on the train escorts as acts of war, or the Baluba as an enemy. The UN Chiefs of Staff in Leopoldville would, of course, not have looked kindly on such labelling in the Swedish field newspaper, which might explain this absence. At the same

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<sup>286</sup> See, for instance, *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 12, XK, 15/12/1961, p. 1; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 15, XK, 8/3/1961, p. 4; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 16, XIK, 17/11/1961, p. 8.

<sup>287</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 17, XK, 24/3/1961, p. 7; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XIK, 23/6/1961, p.9.

time, as we shall see later, the paper would have no problem in doing so during the combat in December 1961.

For the members of the 10th Battalion, *Djungeltelegrafen* on a regular basis included political observations.<sup>288</sup> Articles dealt with current events, the political turmoil in the Congo and its key actors. The observations were mainly intended to keep the soldiers informed about the progress of the UN intervention. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1961 *Djungeltelegrafen* painted a gloomy picture of the future. It stated that the Congo situation could be blamed on most of the involved actors. The goal of the UN operation was to secure the Congo while it was in the process of being transformed into a stable, unified country. The interference by powers like the Soviet Union or Belgium did not help such a cause. Neither did the inability of the Congolese leaders to cooperate. The only way to bring security to the Congo was a 'total victory for either Kasavubu or Lumumba ...', the paper wrote in January 1961. And that was, of course, not going to happen since the UN kept all warring factions apart, *Djungeltelegrafen* concluded.<sup>289</sup> Furthermore, the Katanga secession leader Thsombe was never accorded legitimacy in *Djungeltelegrafen*. After the murder of Lumumba in February 1961, *Djungeltelegrafen* blamed him for the deed, calling it a 'challenge to world opinion.'<sup>290</sup> Unlike within the Swedish political debate, *Djungeltelegrafen* never directly referred to the Congo crisis as relevant for Swedish national security.

As the six-month tour of duty for the 10th Battalion came to an end in June, 138 of the 535 soldiers announced their willingness to stay for another half year as members of the 12th Battalion. The fewest volunteers (though not by far) were from the attacked 'train company'.<sup>291</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* conducted a survey of the 10th Battalion soon before its departure. The question 'Why do you want to stay in the Congo?' had been put to the 62 soldiers transferring to the incoming battalion. The answers were strikingly similar to those presented in the previous chapter. First of all, many of the

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<sup>288</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XK, 20/12/1960, p.9; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 8, XK, 18/1/1961, p.7; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 12, XK, 15/2/1961, p. 10.

<sup>289</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 8, XK, 18/1/1961, p.7.

<sup>290</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 12, XK, 15/2/1961, p. 10.

<sup>291</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 13, XK, 22/2/1961, p. 1.

soldiers wanted to point out that service in the Congo was far less dangerous than the Swedish media had described. 'In general [it had] been more shocking [for the soldiers] to read the news bulletins about the UN service, than to experience it themselves...' <sup>292</sup> Many soldiers seem to have been disturbed by the 'sensationalist journalism' that had contributed to nothing except frighten people back home, some soldiers stated in *Djungeltelegrafen*. <sup>293</sup> Since the dangers had been exaggerated, the 'adventures of Africa' still had an impact on those who had decided to stay. The possibility to continue to explore the world, to expand one's general knowledge and learn new languages would be beneficial to their subsequent civilian careers, according to many soldiers. <sup>294</sup> Then, of course, it was also economically sound to stay on for a second term. Some new motives could also be added. One such concerned the collective itself. Many said that the battalion had offered a good 'team feeling' and camaraderie that had been important in making their time in the Congo pleasant. For many, *Djungeltelegrafen* argued, the six months there had also been a lesson in how other peoples suffer. This had created an understanding and compassion that had contributed to the decision to stay. It had not just created a new appreciation of life in Sweden, *Djungeltelegrafen* continued, but also an understanding of the work UN had to do. <sup>295</sup>

Passages in *Djungeltelegrafen* mentioning the UN mission for peace as a motive in and of itself were otherwise few and far between. One such, however, appeared in connection with a ceremony where the soldiers received the UN medal for '90 days impeccable service in the Congo'. The battalion priest gave a speech on the importance of guarding the peace, which was also printed in *Djungeltelegrafen*.

We live in a peculiar time. It is full of contradictions! A time that more than any other in history speaks of peace, but arms for war. ... A time when the world, as never before is cut in two halves, that can

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<sup>292</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 26, XK, 29/5/1961, p. 4.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

not and will not agree, but where a great war would mean the end, probably for both of them. ... We are soldiers in the 'army of peace'. 'In the service of peace'. Let us remember that one cannot fight for peace while carrying hatred in one's heart – whether being against a comrade, a commander, a certain group or race. ... Peace will not endure by itself! It will not be given for free! One must fight for it! People believe that it is only when the nation is at war that one has to do one's utmost. That is wrong! We have to fight just as hard to keep the peace. We must be prepared to sacrifice our lives also for the peace! ... <sup>296</sup>

Needless to say, coming from the battalion priest, the road to the inner peace necessary for becoming a good soldier for peace went through God. The speech, however, placed the Congo crisis into a wider 'peace on earth' theme, where everyone had to fight in order for peace to prevail. An unwillingness to do so would only prepare the way for more hatred and in the end unleash the apocalyptic Third World War.

It is reasonable to believe that, in general, the Swedish soldier felt neither driven by a duty to 'king and country' (as the Caroleans supposedly were) nor prepared to sacrifice their lives for peace' as members of the Army of Peace. Still, such exhortations found their way into *Djungeltelegrafen* and could therefore be considered building blocks in the motive construction and collective identity of the battalion. Often, the UN motive was presented as plain duty. But how was this duty defined?

The term 'duty' can be used in many different ways and involve almost anything. It can be duty towards comrades, the unit, nation, employer, God or one's family, to mention a few. Resic notes this dilemma: 'Most often the soldiers, particularly the officers, mentioned duty as if they knew what it meant and did not feel a deeper necessity to deliberate on its meaning.'<sup>297</sup> It would here be rewarding to dissect the term duty a bit further in order to say something about the meaning of the term. Duty, Resic argues, can, based on

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<sup>296</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 18, XK, 30/3/1961, pp. 2–3.

<sup>297</sup> Sanimir Resic (1999), p. 215. He is here referring to American Civil War soldiers, but recognizes this as a general situation.

encyclopaedia definitions, be ‘that which one is expected or required to do by moral or legal expectations’ or ‘the binding obligatory force of that which is morally or legally right.’<sup>298</sup> Such definitions recognize two aspects of duty: moral and legal. For the individual soldier, the legal aspect refers to the binding contracts between the soldiers and the Swedish Army. These stipulated that the soldier’s duty was to obey the chain of command and remain in service for the duration of the contract. For the soldiers, the moral aspect of the legal duty was therefore to carry out the work given to them to the best of their ability. In other words, it was your moral duty to completely discharge your legal duty. This is the form of moral duty that Colonel Kjellgren referred to in his initial speech to the soldiers in 1960:

It is our duty to continuously raise the level of training so that the battalion can become an effective instrument in the service of peace.<sup>299</sup>

And in his New Year’s address:

[I]t is our duty to continue to do our best in the service of peace. If we continue in the same way we have, there are great hopes for success in our mission ...<sup>300</sup>

He added, in his final thanks to the soldiers, just days before their rotation:

[T]he goal was to create the best unit that ever existed in this country. Each and every one [of you] has to pass [his] own verdict on

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., pp. 215–216. These are the definitions in Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1994).

<sup>299</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 1, XK, 29/11/1960, p. 1.

<sup>300</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 6, XK, 4/1/1961, p. 1.

whether we have succeeded. I myself am convinced that so is the case.<sup>301</sup>

It was a job, and the goal was to become respected and welcomed while guarding the peace, not to win a war by killing enemies. By 'best', Kjellgren meant best in performing the duties required of a Swedish peacekeeper, best at meeting the expectations and fulfilling the contract. Based on the statistical survey discussed in the previous chapter and *Djungeltelegrafens*' questionnaire above, regarding the soldiers of the 10th Battalion (or at least the great majority of them), it is therefore useful to separate the terms 'duty' and 'motive', rather than treat duty as a motive. The moral duty stretched no further than the contract. In other words, not beyond the battalion itself and the soldiers within it. This is a crucial point, because it separates the peacekeepers from the image of voluntary soldiers in general. For a soldier whose motive is duty, duty becomes moral beyond the legal stipulations. Here duty is strongly connected with, for example, the protection of the nation, and so becomes a response to a perceived threat. This form of moral duty also becomes the force that makes the soldier enlist in the first place.

To further elaborate on the concept of duty, it should be noted that the duty-motive relationship of the battalion as a collective does not necessarily have to be identical to that of soldiers in general. While, as argued above, the soldiers' duty could be limited to the battalion, the battalion's duty could not be limited to its soldiers alone. The battalion as a unit had its own 'contract', hence its legal duty towards the ONUC and Sweden.

For the majority of the 10th Battalion soldiers, events in the Congo did not challenge this division enough to have an impact on the collective motive and duty. The defence of the train escorts was a part of duty, which was clearly directed inwards. It was the protection of the unit, the self-sacrificing attitude among soldiers, that had led Kjellgren to be proud; likewise, it was predominantly those who had put themselves at risk while helping wounded comrades who were recommended for decorations, not those who had killed the most attackers.

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<sup>301</sup> *Djungeltelegrafens*, nr. 26, XK, 29/5/1961, p. 14.



## *Conclusion*

In order to sum up and draw some conclusions from what we can call the 'first phase' of the military experience in the Congo, it can be noted that the first combat events in late 1960 and early 1961 posed some dilemmas regarding duty and motive on many levels. The violent encounter with the Baluba had disturbed the pre-understood 'order' of the mission and created a situation where the motives for the operation needed to be repeated. The most dramatic descriptions were, perhaps unsurprisingly, found in the Swedish media. Here the attacks were referred to as war, including its components of danger, enemies, weapons and casualties. The parallels to Swedish military history further reinforced the image of Swedish soldiers at war. While describing the Baluba as the enemy at the site of the combat, the media nevertheless had problems in explaining the attacks. On the one hand, it was important to underline the effectiveness and superiority of the trained, well-equipped and disciplined Swedes in order to assure the Swedish public that it was unlikely that the entire company would perish during further Baluba attacks. On the other hand, the attacks on the train escorts needed to be 'dangerous enough' to justify the Swedish killing of Baluba. One way to achieve such justification was to consistently refer to them as 'warriors'.

The media did not, however, act in a vacuum, but received photographs and descriptions of the events from the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff and the battalion. This initially created some sort of 'military control' of the Swedish media. The battalion would not talk about war or enemies in connection with the attacks. The UN could by definition not have enemies, but was confined to protecting civilians.

The Baluba were bestowed with 'classic exotic attributes', as supposedly violent and irrational people, and their motives and actions could be ignored. Viewing their motives as misguided or insignificant made it possible to reflect little over the actual killing of them and focus more specifically on the 'perfect performance' of a Swedish unit under fire. This also explains the hard reaction against *SE*'s article. *SE* had reminded both the battalion and the Swedish public that the Baluba warriors were human beings and that Swedes had killed them. Even though *SE* did not blame the battalion for any wrongdoing, its views did not correlate well with the pride

Kjellgren thought the Swedish public should feel about the Swedish performance in combat.

Looking at the battalion's self-perception as created in relation to others, it became essential for the battalion to monitor and if necessary formulate responses to those others, to keep the mission 'in order'. The defensive character of the combat was essential. It enabled the battalion to more or less exclude the motives of the Baluba. The Swedish troops had had no order or motive to fight them; it could all be treated as pure self-defence. Furthermore, as *Djungeltelegrafen* pointed out, while the Baluba had a legitimate reason to be in conflict with Thsombe, they had no motive for attacking UN units. This was also the view of the Swedish media in general as well as the UN. Likewise, the official rhetoric of the Swedish government presented no obstacles whatsoever for the Swedish battalion. Here the arguments were more or less the same as they had been in the summer of 1960, embedding the Swedish UN contribution in a larger framework of international peace, refraining from ever officially discussing the mission in a local context.

At the same time, it had become clear for the soldiers of the 10th Battalion that their legal duty could well include combat and killing. For those whose motives primarily had been to experience exotic Africa or make money, this posed a dilemma. Even though it was understood that peacekeeping was not without dangers, being ambushed, attacked and shot at had probably not been what they had expected. On a collective level the battalion needed to explain and justify that this was part of the duty; something dealt with in three ways. First, it was understood that this was a time-limited commitment. The soldiers were recruited to serve for six months and had no obligation to personally see the entire duration of the ONUC through. Even if there was no clear time limit or 'exit strategy' for either the UN or Sweden in the Congo, the soldiers' contracts were certainly of fixed duration. This made it possible to 'disconnect' from the larger successes or failures of the ONUC and instead relate one's time in the Congo to those of the 10th Battalion. Secondly, the battalion praised itself extensively through *Djungeltelegrafen*. Many compliments from Swedish officials, army representatives, Swedish media, the UN or fellow peacekeepers from other

nations were also noted in the paper. Every reward or words of appreciation given to members of the battalion, whether from the UN, the regiment back home or the Katangan rail company, was mentioned.<sup>302</sup> Thirdly, the battalion's identity successively became 'inward-orientated', emphasizing the 'team spirit'. This was not as a response to a feeling of being left without purpose (as discussed, the soldiers' work was widely supported by the Swedish media, the government and the UN) but rather as a way of justifying risk-taking in order to prevent comrades getting hurt; a way of balancing the motive–duty relationship.

The experiences of the 10th Battalion did not create enough 'disturbance' to challenge the motives of the battalion identity. The battalion seems not to have had any major problems in keeping the soldiers motivated. While the media made a big drama of the attacks on the train escorts, they did not cause much friction to the trinity. On the contrary, the events had underlined the insignificance of the enemy, while at the same time allowing the soldiers to be heroes and celebrating their effectiveness, discipline and courage. Further, it supported the Swedish government's position and the UN mission. In all, this worked well for the battalion.

Summing up the experiences of the 10th Battalion, *Djungeltelegraf* asked whether the Swedish 10th Battalion had been tested harder 'than any of its predecessors among the blue-and-yellow UN troops in the service of peace?'<sup>303</sup> That was also likely the case, at least until the next Congo battalion had summarized its time of service.

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<sup>302</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 7, XK, 11/1/1961, p. 7; *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 10, XK, 1/2/1961, pp. 2, 4–5; *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 13, XK, 22/2/1961, pp. 5, 10; *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 15, XK, 8/3/1961, p. 4; *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 18, XK, 30/3/1961, p. 1.

<sup>303</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 24, XK, 12/5/1961, p. 3.

## 7. The UN on the attack

### *The stressful autumn and winter of 1961*

The combat events in late 1960 and early 1961 turned out to be the beginning of a troublesome year in the Congo. Looking back on 1961, few would pay any attention to the attacks on the train escorts in comparison with the heavy fighting that occurred in Elizabethville in September and again in December 1961. Sköld, Wærn and Ericson-Wolke all offer more detailed accounts of the military action taken. Thus the chronological story presented here is kept brief.

During the spring and summer of 1961 the gendarmerie continued to grow in numbers. By August 1961 they numbered some 7,000–8,000 in all, and still more soldiers were in training. By August there were also some 500 white mercenaries, predominantly officers and professional soldiers, in their ranks. The gendarmerie was well-equipped with heavy weaponry and even a couple of jet fighters.<sup>304</sup> In its February resolution the Security Council had agreed on the expulsion of all foreign personnel from the gendarmerie, but since the Katangan government refused to cooperate, the ONUC had had little success in effecting the resolution. Instead, in August the decision was made to arrest and expel the mercenaries by force. The operation, named Rumpunch, was a limited success. It was a success in the sense that few shots were fired as the gendarmerie soldiers were taken by surprise, but still limited in the sense that only about 80 mercenaries could be captured. New mercenaries were, in addition, continuously arriving in the Congo.<sup>305</sup> Parts of the Swedish 12th Battalion participated in the operation. Very soon it became clear that the Katangan administration had not been weakened by the ONUC action. Rather, as a response to the UN operation, it intensified the harassment of its political opposition, mainly the Baluba tribes. As a

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<sup>304</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 98–99.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

result, large numbers of Baluba fled Elizabethville and erected temporary shelters outside the Swedish camp on the outer edge of the city. The refugee camp eventually grew to hold some 40,000–50,000 people, mostly Baluba. As the security situation in Elizabethville deteriorated, the ONUC decided to repeat actions taken in late August, and launched a new operation in early September. As was the case during Rumpunch, the new operation was also aimed at apprehending mercenaries. It was named Operation Morthor.<sup>306</sup>

In June 1961, the slightly larger 12th Battalion under its new commander Colonel Jonas Wærn had relieved the 10th Battalion. Its six-month service was to end in December. As seen above, it also included some 60 ‘veterans’ from the former 10th Battalion. The events during Operation Rumpunch had inflamed the attitudes towards the UN among leading figures in the Katangan administration. Soon it became obvious that the UN had failed to establish even a fragile stability in Elizabethville. ‘The training during the month of September was done in the form of practical implementation’, Wærn began in his September report.<sup>307</sup> The month had started with massive anti-UN propaganda in the local newspapers and radio, followed by demonstrations against the UN. These, Wærn wrote, were clearly orchestrated by the Katangan Ministry of Information, which even provided truckloads of stones for the demonstrators to throw at UN buildings and vehicles. At the same time the UN civilian administration was under pressure from the central government in Leopoldville to place demands on Katanga, and was pressured by the central government to end the Katangan secession. On 11 September, the head of UN civilian operations in the Congo, Mahmoud Khiari, arrived in Elizabethville with far-reaching orders to intervene in the city. These included the arrest of several Katangan ministers and the installation of a new regime, loyal to Leopoldville, in the city. This, Khiari informed Wærn, would be preceded by a military offensive, and the occupation of key buildings in the city, similar to what had been done during Rumpunch.<sup>308</sup> Wærn opposed the plans of arresting the ministers, not because this necessarily would be the wrong thing to do, but rather because he thought it would be impossible to achieve, and would

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., pp. 99–100.

<sup>307</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIIK, 30/9/1961, p. 1.

<sup>308</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIIK, 30/9/1961, pp. 2–3.

thereby cause the operation to fail. Khiari then changed the goals of the operation to only include the occupation of strategically important buildings in the city. This was sufficient for Wærn, who pointed out that that would be militarily achievable. However, he made sure to add that it was up to the civilian administrators to calculate and deal with the political consequences of the operation.<sup>309</sup>

In the early morning of 13 September, Swedish, Indian and Irish UN soldiers launched the operation. This time, however, the gendarmerie was prepared and opened fire on UN units in Elizabethville. Also in Jadotville, Kamina and Albertville, the gendarmerie opened fire on UN contingents. Soon Elizabethville was transformed into a warzone with intense combat in several places. 'The streets were lit by explosions and tracers bounced [...] of facades and roofs', Wærn wrote.<sup>310</sup> After the first day of fighting the UN had taken and held the post office, three radio stations and a strategic tunnel. The UN had furthermore arrested one Katangan minister. One company had also been sent to Jadotville to reinforce the UN troops there. During that first day and the following night the gendarmerie carried out counter-attacks in several places. During one of these attacks a Swedish soldier was killed and another seriously wounded. The counter-attacks continued over the following days. Especially troublesome were the mortars that could fire devastating rounds over great distances. Besides firing on the UN strongholds in the city, the gendarmerie also fired into the large refugee camp, causing many civilian deaths. To relieve the pressure the UN troops began attacking the gendarmerie positions, now also making effective use of their own mortars. During the following days the UN gained more and more control of the city, and by 20 September a ceasefire was announced. By then the Swedish battalion could count two dead, two seriously wounded, five lightly wounded and sixteen soldiers in shock.<sup>311</sup> Operation Morthor and its consequences was unlike anything the Swedish Army, the Swedish people or the domestic media had ever experienced before. Nevertheless, the media already had even bigger news to report. On 13 September, Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld had arrived in

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., pp. 10–13, 24.

Leopoldville to meet with Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula. In an attempt to personally review the situation and if possible stop the fighting, Hammarskjöld flew to Ndola in Northern Rhodesia on the 17th to meet with Tshombe. He never made it there, as the plane crashed just outside the city a few minutes past midnight on 18 September. The death of Hammarskjöld came as a shock to both the Swedish media and public opinion and dominated the news for weeks to come.<sup>312</sup>

In the Congo, the ceasefire of 20 September was followed by a period of negotiations, exchange of prisoners and positions in Elizabethville. It soon, however, became clear that the UN had again failed to apprehend any more than a few of the large numbers of mercenaries supporting the Tshombe government, or in fact had weakened the Katangan resistance at all. In late November a new Security Council resolution reaffirmed the UN mission to expel the mercenaries from Katanga. It also stated that the Katangan secession was illegal.<sup>313</sup> Tshombe and his ministers treated the resolution as a declaration of war by the UN against Katanga, and the next day he made an aggressive radio speech calling for the Katangans to be ready to fight to the end, using whatever weapons they could find. By the end of November the situation was all set for another round of fighting.<sup>314</sup>

In early December the gendarmerie, now numbering around 4,000, began erecting roadblocks in Elizabethville.<sup>315</sup> This meant that the UN contingents in the city became cut off from each other. In order to assure free movement the troops began clearing the roadblocks, but were met by, and returned, gunfire. By now the UN had claimed air superiority, due to the newly arrived Swedish fighter planes, and could efficiently prevent the gendarmerie from further reinforcing their numbers. On 16 December the UN attacked throughout the city in full strength, now two brigades with a total of 4,600 men. The operation was named Unokat and aimed at occupying every site of military interest in the city. The Swedish battalion, now in the midst of a rotation – the 12th Battalion leaving for home and the 14th Battalion

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<sup>312</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 101–102.

<sup>313</sup> S/5002, UN Security Council Resolution 169, 24 November, 1961, notably with 2 abstentions: France and the UK.

<sup>314</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 160–168.

<sup>315</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 104.

arriving – was given the task of attacking the gendarmerie stronghold, Camp Massart, in Elizabethville.<sup>316</sup> The December fighting moved the military aspect of the UN mission in Katanga even closer to actual war than had been the case in September. Morthor had been understood as an arrest and occupation mission, aimed at apprehending the mercenaries who were believed to be the military backbone of the Katangan secession. Even though Morthor had developed into a warlike situation, with attacks and counterattacks, it had been executed mainly by small patrols with specific missions. In December Unokat, launched on the 16th, was a combined two-brigade attack with coordinated actions and including over 4,500 men and supported by extensive artillery bombardment. Also, in the days before the attack, UN fighter planes had struck gendarmerie targets. This time the goal was not to capture mercenaries but, as the order stated, ‘for the destruction of gendarmerie resistance in [the] E[lizabeth]ville area’.<sup>317</sup> No longer were the gendarmerie given an ultimatum and thus a chance to respond to or call for negotiations. Neither were the UN troops, as they had been earlier, equipped with megaphones in order to instruct opposing units to surrender. Rather, the UN tried to break the morale of the gendarmerie by killing them. The tone in Wærn’s report was also different. Unokat was described as the final attack, and the opposition was for the first time in official orders labelled ‘enemy’. Wærn now also consistently referred to the gendarmerie as the enemy. Hence Unokat did not hold back any of the UN’s military power in Elizabethville. As an example, the Swedish mortar platoon alone fired 2,248 rounds in December, 940 of them on the 16th.<sup>318</sup> Wærn reported the method used by the UN’s mortar crews:

As soon as enough numbers of enemies had gathered in any of the [...] fire-registered [...] mortar points ... the fire was released with good effect.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, pp. 2–13.

<sup>317</sup> ‘Operation Instruction No 14’, in Kongorapport, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, App. 1.

<sup>318</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, pp. 2–13, App. 6.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., p. 6.



The attack on Camp Massart went well from a UN perspective, and by midday on 16 December Swedish troops had gained control of the site. Over the following days sporadic gunfire was heard in Elizabethville, but the gendarmerie had been beaten if not yet destroyed. The UN military success in Elizabethville had led Tshombe to once again willingly negotiate Katanga's future, and he met with Adoula the same month.<sup>320</sup> By the beginning of January 1962 the situation in Elizabethville had returned to 'normal', and the UN now had free access throughout the city.

The fighting in the autumn and winter of 1961 would eventually lead to the end of the Swedish battalions' service in Elizabethville. Wærn had made two complaints to the UN Force Commander in which he demanded to be transferred to a less arduous area. First and foremost, the management of the huge refugee camp meant that an intolerable workload had been placed on the Swedish battalion for a long time. Wærn thought it was time for others to take over. Second, Wærn was dissatisfied with the military organization and command in Elizabethville. He was especially critical of the Indian/Ethiopian brigade during the attack of the 16th. The operation, Wærn argued, had shown 'too great [a] difference in military spirit [and] military training', explicitly referring to the Indian/Ethiopian brigade, whose inactivity had led to a situation whereby 'the Irish/Swedish brigade had to fight for ten hours without supporting pressure.'<sup>321</sup> When Wærn summed up the events in December, he reported 3 killed in action, 18 'accidents and warwounds', and 21 'mental disorders including shock'.<sup>322</sup> The Swedes were replaced at Camp Massart but remained responsible for the refugee camp until the beginning of April 1962, when the Swedish 14th Battalion was finally transferred to Kamina.

The fighting in September and December brought with it several challenges to the pre-understanding of the Congo mission. It also highlighted perhaps the most fundamental dilemma of the relations between the nodes of analysis: the different interpretations of peacekeeping and warring. The most

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>321</sup> 'Telegram from Swed. XII and XIV BN to Force Commander ONUC', in Kongorapport, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, App. 4.

<sup>322</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, p. 17.

basic of questions once again appears: 'What is war?' Recalling Clausewitz's 'trinity', war should be understood as the activity of three nodes: the government, the public and the army. In the 'ideal' constellation of this trinity, the war is declared and politically motivated by the government, supported by the public and willingly executed by the military. It involves nations at war. Naturally, this was not the case for Sweden in 1961: the situation was completely new. This was not a war that any of the analytic nodes had planned for or were prepared to endure. It was not a war to defend the nation or its national interests, but neither was it a foreign legion somewhere that happened to be Swedish, or just some state-employed relief workers in danger. It was a regular army battalion, trained, equipped and sent off on a mission by the nation. As discussed earlier, this means little problems as long as the mission remained in its predefined state, or as in January when combat was clearly defensive, unproblematic to justify and did not involve the loss of Swedish lives.

In order to decipher these complex relationships between nodes of analysis and in the end relate them to the battalions' self-perception, several aspects need to be examined. In what way were the political motives and consequences of the fighting discussed? On what grounds were the UN actions or Swedish participation defended? How were the events described, in what atmosphere were they presented, and what images were used? What was the view of the enemy and who were the victims of the conflict? How was all this met and processed by the battalions?

The conflict in Katanga raised several challenges to the pre-understood 'order' of the mission. Focusing solely on the autumn and winter of 1961, the relationship between the battalions and the media became strained as the press reported on the events in the Congo. Andén-Papadopoulos has argued that several studies indicate that the news media in general has a tendency to become more nationalistic and biased in wartime, backing the agenda of the government and army command. This tendency rests on the assumption that the media accepts a responsibility to uphold civilian morale, dismiss rumours and comfort the public in times of need.<sup>323</sup> One way to do this is to play down the cruelties of warfare, especially when those cruelties involve

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<sup>323</sup> Kari Andén-Papadopoulos (2000), p. 31.

one's own soldiers. A careful selection of photographs to publish is also part of such an approach. Yet there is a common description in earlier research that Swedish media 'betrayed' the fighting soldiers in the Congo. But how and why was this done? Sköld, Ericson-Wolke and others argue that there existed a psychological warfare and propaganda directed towards UN soldiers and UN-friendly nations during the September and December fighting, which led to a situation whereby 'many in Sweden got a vague memory of there being something shady about the UN operation in the Congo'.<sup>324</sup> This, in turn, after the ONUC, led to a silence about the mission that for several years had a discomfiting impact on those who participated, according to Sköld. The suspicion of something being 'shady' about the Congo operation does, in fact, first emanate from media coverage of the events in late 1961. Looking more closely at what the press produced, there were mainly four areas of concern that created the frictions; something which will be covered in more depth below. First, the political turmoil that surrounded the events created a sort of political chaos, where discussions on legality, UN mandates and responsibilities started to split European UN members' views on the ONUC. Some foreign governments and media became deeply critical of the UN actions, sometimes even insinuating that the Swedish battalions had the role of an illegitimate aggressor in the Congo. Second, and to a large extent constituting the background for the political disagreements, was the war itself. The Swedish media naturally reported the factual events in Elizabethville involving dramatic scenes of combat, casualties, victims, fear and suffering. Third, and further adding to the chaotic situation and anxiety, was the Katangan regime's ability to actually produce misleading news or propaganda, in a way that rightfully can be described as psychological warfare. Finally, there were also incidents of actual misconduct and questionable actions by soldiers in the Swedish battalions.

### *Political turmoil*

A striking difference between the fighting in January 1961 and the events that took place in September the same year was the political significance of

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<sup>324</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 230.

what happened. Naturally, the UN operation Morthor had much greater implications for international politics than the earlier combat involving just Swedes and Baluba. This time the clashes were more intense, on a significantly larger scale, engaged many UN contingents, were thought of as politically decisive, and involved a better equipped and better trained enemy. One particular event during the September fighting also contributed to raising the temperature of international politics. On the morning of 13 September, the UN civilian representative in Katanga, Conor Cruise O'Brien, maintained that the Katangan secession had ended. In other words, that the UN, by the use of force, had reinstated Katanga as part of the Congo.<sup>325</sup> This statement, premature as it was, could easily be interpreted as the UN intervening in Congolese internal affairs, and even as carrying out the will of the central government in Leopoldville. If so, it could further be argued as being a breach of the mandate and not in accordance with UN principles.<sup>326</sup> The media in mainly Belgium, England and France, but also other places, which were sceptical to the UN, were given an excellent opportunity to attack the UN cause of action. O'Brien described this as hypocrisy:

When Katanga is hurt, money screams, and money has powerful lungs. The reaction of 'Press and public opinion' ... to our action was ... an ear-splitting and almost universal howl of execration.<sup>327</sup>

The outcry in international media created a peculiar situation in Sweden. There, the government had made clear from the beginning that the Swedish

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<sup>325</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), p. 100.

<sup>326</sup> O'Briens statement and the motives behind Operation Morthor in general have been the subject of a heated debate ever since. To what extent did O'Brien and Khiari act alone and what were their instructions from Hammarskjöld? For discussions on Morthor, see Conor Cruise O'Brien (1962), pp. 246–290; Bengt Rösiö (2001), pp. 23–32; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 100–101; Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 133–139; Rolf Rembe & Anders Hellberg (2011), pp. 106–116; Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 154–159; Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 150–169; 'Avskrift av handbrev den 30 januari 1962 från överste Wærn, Elisabethville, till general Almgren', in HP48:Kongo.

<sup>327</sup> O'Brien, (1962), p. 261, English original.

troops acted under a UN mandate and were under UN control. Hence criticism implying the misuse of Wærn and his battalion should be directed towards the UN, not Sweden. However, criticism of Sweden was hard to avoid. The UN forces in Elizabethville almost exclusively consisted of Indian, Irish and Swedish personnel. Furthermore, O'Brien was Irish and Hammarskjöld Swedish. The accusations of misconduct and breaching the mandate naturally clashed with those nations' decision to support the UN action by allowing their troops to participate. Newspapers in Sweden picked up on the international disagreement in regard to the UN's role in the Congo, presenting the verbal attacks on the UN and Sweden to their readers. Most notable were the reactions from Great Britain and Belgium, which were reported in the Swedish media. On the second day of fighting, *Aftonbladet* noted the reactions in some of the British media:

Not since the days of Hitler has there been such a cold-blooded aggression like the one orchestrated by the UN against Katanga. Even the same method is used, the Daily Express writes in its editorial ...<sup>328</sup>

*Aftonbladet*, true to its habit of publishing sensationalist news, had here chosen the most spiteful European paper it could find, one presenting an image of the Swedish soldiers in Katanga as minions of a Hitler-like led invasion. Quotations like the one above should, however, not be interpreted as a way to deliberately sow a feeling of suspicion within the Swedish public, but rather of exposing the enemies that the UN – and thereby to some extent also Sweden – had beyond the gendarmerie. In *Aftonbladet*'s opinion, the attacks from British and Belgian newspapers were unfair and wrong. *Aftonbladet*, which soon became one of the most confrontational and outspoken defenders of the UN action in the Congo, accused the Belgian government of 'sabotage against the UN' and regretted that the London administration among others 'refused to realize that the Tshombe

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<sup>328</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 14/9/1961.

government has to go.’<sup>329</sup> Still, O’Brien’s statement had led the press to express concern. *Svenska Dagbladet* thus wrote:

It is, least to say, a frank statement that will bring several matters of principle to the fore. According to the UN Council’s resolution in February the UN forces were mandated to, as a last resort, use force to prevent civil war in the Congo and the action taken last Wednesday would therefore be in line with this decision. Whether the resolution, in turn, was in line with the UN principles to not interfere in another state’s internal affairs, can however be questioned. Even more so can it be discussed whether the UN’s actions in Katanga lately ... could be justified according to the UN Charter.<sup>330</sup>

Other Swedish newspapers shared this concern, as shown in *Svenska Dagbladet*’s ‘Dagens debatt’ (Today’s Debate).<sup>331</sup> In 1960 the operation had been justified as a noble thing to do in order to prevent the threatening civil war. The cause of preventing such a war was then evaluated in relation to the dangers facing Swedish soldiers. This, in turn, necessitated an evaluation of the situation the soldiers worked within. The examination of the soldiers’ performance during the train escort combat events had led the media to conclude that they were very capable of taking care of themselves. In September, the argument of the prevention of civil war once again appeared but was now discussed in relation to the question of the operation’s legality. Was the UN really entitled to intervene in another country’s internal affairs even though it did so to prevent a civil war? The question was therefore in a way elevated away from the soldiers’ experiences and turned towards the complexity of international politics and Sweden’s role within it. This meant that the question of *why* the UN acted the way it did became more highlighted than *how* the Swedish soldiers performed. This aspect will be further elaborated on below. The death of Hammarskjöld in September

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<sup>329</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 21/9/1961.

<sup>330</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 14/9/1961.

<sup>331</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 17/9/1961.

effectively left the question unanswered. However, it would reappear during the fighting in December.

The fierce fighting naturally also meant that the Swedish government had to reaffirm its position. Confidence in the UN was still solid. The Swedish government would not dream of withdrawing the troops, Undén wrote in his diary in September.<sup>332</sup> In a press release of 19 September, the government made a clear statement blaming the mercenaries for the troubles in Katanga:

UN troops in Katanga face a rebellion led by a bunch of irresponsible foreigners, who act against the interest of the Congolese people.<sup>333</sup>

The short quote captures three important positions of the Swedish government. First and foremost: the Swedish UN troops were UN troops rather than Swedish troops, in regard to why they were used the way they were. This had been stressed since the beginning of the mission and was a widely used argument, especially towards foreign criticism. From an operational point of view this meant that it was the UN, and not Sweden, that was responsible. Sweden, as a UN member, backed the overall purpose of the UN action but could not comment on specific operations in detail. Second, the UN was fighting irresponsible white mercenaries who were to blame for the chaotic situation. Third, all action taken by the UN was in the interest of the Congolese people. Even the secession leader himself, Tshombe, was described as influenced or even controlled by the foreign elements. In parliament, Prime Minister Erlander gave the government's view on the Katanga situation in October by once again repeating the goal of preventing civil war and expelling the mercenaries. The February resolution was, according to Erlander, in line with the UN Charter, and the

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<sup>332</sup> Karl Molin (ed.) (2002), p. 650.

<sup>333</sup> 'Pressmeddelande den 19 september', *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p. 58. The press release came as a response to Congo Brazzaville's demand for the withdrawal of Swedish troops from Katanga.

UN troops had to try to implement it. This position was expected but gave few answers to the now more pressing question of why Swedish peacekeepers had to do this job. Even Erlander himself, when the fighting began, wrote in his diary:

It was bitter and I think I have to agree with the British government that it is very doubtful whether the destruction of Katanga by force was a part of the UN mission. But of course, *D.N.* [*Dagens Nyheter*] is right today, that the action was right, maybe inevitable.<sup>334</sup>

In parliament, Erlander continued to emphasize that the Swedish government could not, at the time the troops were sent to the Congo, foresee the developments now taking place in Katanga. Like Undén had argued in January, Erlander stated that a withdrawal from the Congo at this point would be a betrayal of the UN:

To fail the UN in the Congo would not be in accordance with our fundamental understanding of what our foreign policy demands of us, and entitles us to do internationally.<sup>335</sup>

Furthermore, Erlander assured MPs that the Swedish soldiers had performed well, in fact 'extraordinarily honourably', but warned that they might well be put through further stress before the mission could end. Also, the government had made sure that the soldiers, through the UN, had everything they needed to do their job, especially referring to more and heavier weapons and the support of the newly arrived Swedish fighter planes.<sup>336</sup> While the government, with unanimous parliamentary support, in

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<sup>334</sup> Sven Erlander (ed.) (2011), p. 142.

<sup>335</sup> 'Anförande av statsminister Erlander den 25 oktober I riksdagens första kammare', *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p. 61.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59–61.



September declared itself a solid supporter of the UN action, it became harder for the press to push in another direction. This correlates well with Andrén-Papadopoulos' (and others') argument that one of the media's prime functions is to present the views of the political elite. In the case of political consensus, the media therefore have a 'mainstreaming effect' on public opinion.<sup>337</sup> Since this political consensus manifestly existed in the Swedish parliament, it could therefore be assumed that the Swedish media would also be unified in their UN support. As has been shown, this was to a large extent also the case. However, there is an important point to make here. Because the mission was an international UN one with parts of the Swedish military involved, the political consensus or conflicts also became international, with Sweden necessarily as affected as any other country. In other words, the media found and reported on existing political differences on a level higher than that of the Swedish political landscape. No political party in Sweden opposed the presence of troops in the Congo or condemned the action taken there. Nevertheless, Sweden was not at war. If there was a war, as many had argued, it was the UN which was fighting. In the UN, members were not as united as the political parties in Sweden. In this case, governments play the same role in the UN as political parties in national parliaments. Hence, 'the views of the political elite' reproduced in the press explicitly and with no euphemisms included the views of the political opposition within the UN. Harsh criticism of the ONUC from the foreign press had some effects on the Swedish news media. In September 1961 it did not, however, in any wider sense divide the press in regard to what they thought the UN had to do in the Congo. Nevertheless, the attacks on UN policy still made Swedish newspapers seek the government's response to the criticism. After all, Undén had several times stated that Swedish troops would only fight in self-defence; something several papers reminded their readers of.<sup>338</sup>

To further complicate matters, the most severe (European) opposition, mainly found in the French, Belgian and British press, could sometimes be hard to categorize for the Swedish media. The fact that it was mainly citizens

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<sup>337</sup> Kari Andrén-Papadopoulos (2000), p. 31.

<sup>338</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/9/1961. In 'Dagens debatt', the views of *Handelstidningen*, *Smålands Dagblad* and *Smålandsposten* were also presented.

from those countries who had been recruited as the hated white mercenaries in Katanga made it confusing to know whether to treat, for instance, the UN member Belgium as a concerned ally (a political elite with a different political position) or in fact an enemy (albeit a non-fighting one).

On 5 December, the UN once again became involved in combat in Elizabethville, and many of the debates from September resurfaced. *Aftonbladet* had noted the growing tension and urged Sweden to stand by the UN in what was to come. So far, the paper argued, the UN had failed in all its efforts, even in protecting its own personnel from being murdered or captured. The UN stood before the 'decisive test' in Katanga and it would be devastating for the world organization if Sweden were to abandon the UN at this moment, the article continued. It was a question of testing the legitimacy for the future; a call for the UN and its member states to turn words into action.<sup>339</sup>

On the 15th, one day before the large-scale attack on Camp Massart, parliament discussed the Congo issue. Undén continued to emphasize the government's position, mostly repeating earlier standpoints.<sup>340</sup> The government insisted on calling the operation a police mission. Of course, there was not much else to do. The government could hardly declare war on Katanga or change the rhetoric of non-interference in Congolese internal affairs. The political opposition also endorsed the government's position. Right-wing (*Högerpartiet*) leader Gunnar Heckscher commented: 'We cannot hesitate in our loyalty to the UN', while the leader of the Liberals (*Folkpartiet*), Bertil Ohlin, called the UN mission 'obviously justified'.<sup>341</sup> Still, members of parliament expressed concerns about the development in the Congo. Lars Eliasson, representing *Centerpartiet*, raised the inevitable question of where, in the light of what was happening in the Congo, the boundary between police duties and involvement in internal affairs went. While he confirmed his support for the government's position in December 1961, he clearly indicated that if progress was not made soon in the Congo

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<sup>339</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 5/12/1961.

<sup>340</sup> 'Interpellationssvar avgivet av utrikesminister Undén den 15 december i riksdagens andra kammare', *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1962), p. 62.

<sup>341</sup> 'Ang. interpellationssvar ang. utvecklingen i Kongo' 15/12/1961, UD HP48:Kongo.

and negotiations re-established, the government should 're-evaluate our country's military commitment in the Congo'.<sup>342</sup>

The debate also accentuated the different roles that the UN and Sweden had in the Congo. While it was the UN's role to achieve peace and order there, it was Sweden's role to be loyal to the UN. This was an important distinction to make because it made the debate in December 1961 focus more on Swedish loyalty to the UN and less on the Congo. Heckscher commented:

There cannot be any doubt of our loyalty to the UN. ... Not least when considering the future, it is in our interest that the authority of the UN organization is preserved, and we have therefore now no other choice than to accept their decisions, even when they may seem questionable.<sup>343</sup>

The relationship between Sweden and the UN would last longer than any war in the Congo. Hence, it was to some extent more important to maintain this relationship than solve the problems in the Congo or question the UN course of action. In the end, a strong UN would benefit the Swedish national interest. From this point of view, the media coverage of the Congo violence was criticized in parliament. The news media, even the Swedish news media, had failed to grasp the distinction between the role of the UN and that of Sweden. By reporting from the Congo on the Swedish efforts, the media had 'created the impression that it is Sweden who wages war in Katanga, which is not the case', Stig Alemyr, representing the Social Democratic Party, argued.<sup>344</sup> He continued:

It would be valuable if newspapers, that mould public opinion ... would underline that it is the UN which acts down there and that the

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<sup>342</sup> Riksdagens protokoll. Andra kammaren. Nr. 36, December 14–22, 1961, pp. 70–71.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., pp. 75–77. Ohlin also argued that loyalty to the UN was a main motive for Swedish participation.

<sup>344</sup> Riksdagens protokoll. Andra kammaren. Nr. 36, December 14–22, 1961, p. 80.

Swedish troops and the Swedish equipment are at the disposal of the UN. One should ... emphasize that it is the UN that is taking the measures.<sup>345</sup>

The official Sweden's altruistic motives in 1960 had paired with the UN's agenda for global peace and humanity. Sweden was a proud practitioner of peacekeeping. Now, as the UN fought a war in the Congo, Sweden was still a UN supporter but not interested in being seen as a practitioner of war. Yet it was apparent that there, even in parliament, still existed difficulties in defining Sweden's role in the Congo as nothing more than a loyal UN member. For James Dickson, *Högerpartiet*, the violence in Katanga meant that

Swedish military kill Africans every day. ... I have always believed that Sweden ... has had a special mission as a conciliator between nations. That mission will be harder considering what is happening down there.<sup>346</sup>

No one in parliament opposed the government's position, and neither did anyone argue for the withdrawal of Swedish troops from the Congo. Nevertheless, the political rhetoric of non-interference created a dilemma as the soldiers in the Congo almost simultaneously with the debate executed a military operation clearly interfering in internal affairs. Two major frictions between nodes of analysis can be seen as consequences of the different interpretations. First, and further examined below, the non-war rhetoric did not allow the soldiers to be soldiers, which meant that all combat that occurred in Katanga involving the UN had to be considered a failed police mission, since policemen do not kill enemies. Second, and therefore, all combat, even the planned attacks by the UN, were by the Swedish press described as chaotic, uncontrolled, confusing and dangerous, which further added to the image of warfare in Katanga. In December the question of

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

legality once again became an issue in the Swedish media. This time, however, a difference of opinion could be noted in the leading editorials. *Svenska Dagbladet* picked up where it had left off in September, asking by which right the UN had attacked the gendarmerie. For *Svenska Dagbladet* the events in December could clearly be interpreted as interfering in Congolese internal affairs and siding with the central government. Any scenario leading to Swedish soldiers participating in ‘crushing’ the Katangan regime by force would then stand in contradiction to the terms by which Sweden had come to participate in the first place, the paper argued.<sup>347</sup> *Aftonbladet* replied that *Svenska Dagbladet* spoke as if the Tshombe government was a legal government, which of course it was not. ‘What purpose, in the midst of the fighting that the UN and the Swedish troops in UN service are involved in, ... can such criticism serve?’, the paper asked.<sup>348</sup>

In late December a small but loud Swedish group opposing Swedish participation in the ONUC made itself heard in Swedish newspapers. Under the name of ‘The Fourteens’ Petition’ and later, as more members joined, the ‘Katanga Lobby’, they hurled hard criticism at the Swedish government. On 18 December, parts of their proclamation were published by *Dagens Nyheter*.

It fills us with shame when modern armed Swedish jet fighters are brought into action against post offices, radio buildings and other civilian targets, when Swedish mortars bombard hospitals and streets and Swedish soldiers are deployed, with superior equipment, to kill natives whose leaders only have expressed the people’s will to live in independence and peace.<sup>349</sup>

Criticism was also launched towards the Swedish pro-UN opinion in general and the media specifically, who were accused of having double standards vis-à-vis the developing world. On the one hand, there existed wide support for

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<sup>347</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9/12/1961.

<sup>348</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 11/12/1961.

<sup>349</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 18/12/1961.

peoples' rights to freedom, independence and self-determination, the Lobby argued. On the other hand, the 'Swedish war effort in Katanga' was portrayed in heroic terms. The reputation of Sweden as a nation also became a topic of debate. Not only was it 'grotesque' to use Swedish soldiers to strike down freedom fighters; it also severely jeopardized Sweden's good international reputation, another letter to the editor argued.<sup>350</sup> That the reputation of Sweden was at stake due to Swedish soldiers fighting in the Congo was not a problem, according to *Aftonbladet*. Instead, one could wonder, *Aftonbladet* wrote, why Sweden would want a good reputation among Europe's fascists, right-wing extremists or the oppressors in South Africa?<sup>351</sup>

The angry opposition, mainly from the Katanga Lobby, to the ONUC and the Swedish participation continued to be heard throughout 1962. The Lobby sent letters to newspapers and to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The friction between the defenders and the sceptics of the ONUC within the Swedish media started to become more visible in the autumn of 1961. Thereafter the debate on the Congo question therefore to a large extent came to deal with the legitimacy of the UN intervention. Consequently, also the more moderate debates in Swedish newspapers during the intense winter of 1961 dealt rather with the UN's role in international affairs and Sweden's role in the UN than addressing the needs of the Congo itself. As seen, this had also been the case in September, but was even more accentuated in December.

The continued Swedish participation in the Congo indirectly meant that the foreign anti-UN press viewed the Swedish government as a strong supporter of the warlike actions taken by the UN in Katanga. By January 1962, the criticism had become so vociferous that Undén found it necessary to personally respond by publishing an open letter in one of the leading Belgian newspapers, *Le Soir*.<sup>352</sup> Here, Undén pointed out that the criticism

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<sup>350</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 21/12/1961.

<sup>351</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 19/12/1961.

<sup>352</sup> 'Utrikesminister Undéns insändare i tidningen "Le Soir" angående Kongo-frågan den 25 januari', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1962*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1963), pp. 95–98.

was threefold. The first issue of dispute was, he argued, Sweden's general support of the UN's decision to intervene in the Congo in the first place. Undén, as he had done domestically, pointed out that this decision had been taken by a unanimous Security Council. As a loyal member of the UN, Sweden had to contribute to the practical implementation of any such decision. He admitted that Sweden and Ireland, as neutral European states, had a special duty to respond in such delicate missions as the one in the Congo. Furthermore, it was uncalled for and strange behaviour for one member of the UN to criticize another for simply doing what had been requested by the Security Council. On the issue of the breach of mandate, Undén assured Belgian readers that the Swedish government continuously monitored the UN's plan of action. There might have been a few mistakes, he admitted, but that was unavoidable given the chaotic and complex situation in which the UN troops operated. Sweden had no self-interest in the Congo; the operation was strongly supported in Sweden and it would be very irresponsible of any member of the UN to, against the will of the Security Council, jeopardize the entire mission by withdrawing its contingent. Finally, on the third issue, regarding the rumours of brutality and excessive use of force by Swedish soldiers, Undén claimed that the vast majority of such accusations were made as part of anti-UN propaganda and simply not true. He stated that if Swedish citizens were found guilty of such behaviour, he expected them to be punished, without further specifying who would do that. Addressing the issue of brutality, Undén made it clear that neither the Swedish government nor the Swedish military exercised any commanding authority over the Swedish UN contingent. It was all under the control of the UN and its Force Commander. In making this clear, he suggested that criticism of this kind should be directed towards the UN rather than Sweden. The letter showed that there was little divergence between the external and internal political rhetoric. The themes of UN loyalty, UN cause of peace, Swedish lack of self-interest, Swedish neutrality and the UN's responsibility for the use of Swedish soldiers were the same as those aired domestically.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Cf. 'Inlägg av utrikesminister Undén i remissdebatten i andra kammaren den 23 januari', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1962*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesdepartementet, 1963), pp. 91–94.

### *The army and the war*

For the Swedish army and the Congo battalions, the fighting meant several things. First and foremost: the soldiers in the Congo had actually been at war from a military perspective. From a military viewpoint, the fighting in September and December of 1961 had all the ingredients of war. Heavy weapons, like anti-aircraft guns and mortars, had been deployed and used, planned and coordinated attacks with brigades had been carried out, and fighter planes had been used. Moreover, all weapons had been used with the purpose of killing an enemy that fought back with similar strength and objectives. The stories of bullets flying closely by, civilian suffering, fear and victims, added to the imagery of local war. In leaving the political turmoil uncommented and concentrating on the local scene of combat, the soldiers of the Congo battalions could be allowed to adopt the soldier role model. From such a perspective, representatives of the army could be nothing but impressed.

Where the civilian newspapers failed to express gratitude and admiration for the achievements by the soldiers, the army magazine, *Arménytt*, took their place. During the mission in the Congo, *Arménytt* reported frequently.<sup>354</sup> The pages generally described the work quantitatively, reporting on the temperature or number of letters sent home. Another theme was the exotic environment, including exciting wildlife like crocodiles and elephants. The many interesting souvenirs one could buy were also mentioned. Stories of the wildlife were viewed as something that could attract possible recruits in Sweden. In fact, some photo material and films were sent home from the Congo battalions specifically for this purpose.<sup>355</sup> After the September fighting, however, the paper turned more to reporting on the military aspects and the actual fighting by providing Wærn and others of the Congo battalion space to relate their experiences. Articles about the events in September became a 'Congo Special' issue of the paper in late 1961 that strongly focused on the Swedish fighting experience. Wærn assured the

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<sup>354</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 5–6, 1960, pp. 40–42; *Arménytt*, nr. 1, 1961, pp. 40–41; *Arménytt*, nr. 2, 1961, p. 25; *Arménytt*, nr. 3, 1961, p. 62; *Arménytt*, nr. 4, 1961, pp. 19–23; *Arménytt*, nr. 6, 1961, pp. 6–16; *Arménytt*, nr. 4, 1962, pp. 21–25; *Arménytt*, nr. 2, 1963, p. 43; *Arménytt*, Specialnummer, 1963, pp. 2–3.

<sup>355</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 5, XIK, 31/10/1961, p. 14.



readers of *Arménytt* that the 12th Battalion soldiers had all been heroes during the hectic days in September.<sup>356</sup>

I exclude no one. Signallers, clerks, cooks, mechanics, postmen – all of them were sent to combat and fulfilled their tasks while risking their lives.<sup>357</sup>

Wærn's definition of a hero in this sense was strictly confined to selfless performance in battle. The soldiers' ability to overcome their personal fears and remain calm, to execute orders without hesitation, to demonstrate initiative when needed and to be effective in the context of life-threatening combat had, in Wærn's view, made them all heroes, even if they did not know it themselves. The soldiers' performance had obviously had an immense impact on Wærn, who also repeated this opinion in reports to the Army Staff.<sup>358</sup> In fact, as he maintained in both *Arménytt* and the reports, the Swedish soldiers were the best personnel one could find in the Congo in this respect, even superior to the professional soldiers of other UN contingents. The attributes that made this possible, according to him, were self-control, stamina and exceptional initiative, which in turn could be explained by the 'good soldier material' and the Swedish peacetime military training and education.

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<sup>356</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 6, 1961, pp. 6–9.

<sup>357</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 6, 1961, p. 8.

<sup>358</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIIC, 30/9/1961, pp. 19–20.



(Image 7.) Corporal Evert Axelsson – 27 years old and a machinist in civil life – manned during the Elizabethville fighting the machine gun on an APC: ‘I took part in the bloody attack on the post and telegraph office and my job was, among many things, to keep the Katangan machine guns on the roof quiet. I also took part in repelling a fierce counter-attack in central Elizabethville. Two jeeps full of gendarmes were stopped by my and my comrades’ fire. Many were felled by our bullets. Being in the midst of the deafening combat allows no time for any deeper reflections on the risks and danger to one’s own life. The machine gun, which worked extraordinarily [well] during the combat, was my best life insurance. Later, when it was all over – and one got the time to reflect a bit on what had happened – one felt strangely empty and weird inwardly. The worst part ... was when we were fired on by a bazooka – one shot hit a concrete post just a few metres in front of the APC, while another touched the side of the car...’



(Image 8.) Corporal Hans Andersson – a 22- year- old farmer – headed a antitank squad during the combat and was frequently in the forefront of the fighting: ‘It was gruesome to feel bullets and ricochets fly closely past one’s body .... It was just as liberating to hit the ground, crawl to a suitable position and open fire on the Katanga gendarmes’ armoured cars. There was no time to think ... one acted on instinct. Grateful that one’s officers had pushed hard on how to take cover during the military training back home. The most unpleasant incident was when we were to neutralize some Katangan armoured cars and were met by fire from hardly 50 metres ... . Luckily the enemy aimed badly, but I realized what it really meant to face death... The [...] shot I fired at an armoured car from an advanced but exposed position gave the greatest satisfaction. When the smoke settled and I was ready to fire my second shot, I saw that the tower was blown off and that shot number two was not necessary.’

In addition to Wærn's personal views on the September fighting, *Arménytt* also included a number of soldier accounts of what the combat had been like. The battalion's press officer, Hans Carsborg, had interviewed a handful of soldiers who 'under the banner of the UN got to experience this, the most gruesome and most severe of all dangers – THE WAR.'<sup>359</sup> The small stories were combined with pictures showing the men in various combat poses. The personal accounts and images were produced especially for *Arménytt*, which printed the entire material with few changes.<sup>360</sup> The stories bore witness to how the soldiers had overcome the immense pressure of being under gunfire while dealing with the tasks given to them. The descriptions of the actual killing of enemies were not concealed in the stories, nor admittance of fear or unpleasant feelings afterwards. The images and stories differed strikingly to earlier stories in *Arménytt* of the Congo as a place to get souvenirs and experience the wildlife. Just as in the case of those articles, the publication of stories about battle experience must have been thought off as appealing to readers in some way. Adventure stories about real war and battle experiences might have been seen as a way to awaken interest among the conscripts in Sweden.

The fighting in September was also a unique experience for the Swedish Army as an institution. As seen in the previous chapter, the Swedish Army thought of itself as a capable and large institution, well-organized and prepared to defend Sweden.<sup>361</sup> What it lacked, however, was experience of war. Moreover, the army did not view the contribution to UN missions as a task for the army, but rather as the 'lending' of troops and material as ordered by the government. This clear hierarchy of objectives can be seen through the army's response to requests for additional equipment to be sent to the Congo. An example is the request for the very effective and highly valued armoured cars that the battalions used. The Army Staff concluded in a memorandum of late November, well after the cars' proven combat ability during the September fighting, that to transfer or sell 15 of the army's 490

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<sup>359</sup> *Arménytt*, nr. 6, 1961, p. 12. A comparison between the printed article and the original in the War Archive shows that the editors had changed the description of the gendarmerie from 'black' to 'native' in one of the texts.

<sup>360</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 6, XIIC, 30/11/1961, p. 27.

<sup>361</sup> E.g. *Arménytt*, nr. 4, 1961, pp. 2–3.

armoured cars to be used in the Congo would deplete the reserve to 22 vehicles, which was thought of as an unacceptable limitation to the army's capability.<sup>362</sup> Even though the fighting in Elizabethville did not change the view of the Congo mission as something outside the purposes of the Swedish military, it nevertheless created an opportunity for the army to evaluate the Swedish personnel and the equipment's performance in war. As such, the Congo mission offered valuable input in regard to the issue that the Swedish Army treated as their prime mission: the defence of Sweden. In early 1962 the Army Staff had made such an evaluation. It concluded that the Swedish military equipment in general had worked well and as expected. Notably the heavy weapons (anti-tank rifle, machine guns and mortars) in the hands of well-trained Swedish soldiers had had a devastating effect on the enemy. 'When opposition had been located in a house, one hit from a anti-tank rifle was enough to crush the opponent', the report stated.<sup>363</sup> In regard to the soldiers themselves, the evaluation praised the Swedish peacetime training and education for producing soldiers that had shown themselves to be effective and able to take initiatives. Some weaknesses were also pointed out. One problem that was emphasized was the motives. For a soldier to perform well and be ready to take risks, he needed a clear understanding of what values he was protecting and for what or whom he fought. It would also make the soldiers more resistant to psychological warfare. This indicates that it to some extent had been a problem within the battalions. The solution to that problem lay with the commanding officers, who by their enthusiasm and willingness to accomplish specific objectives in battle would encourage the soldiers to do the same. The interviews conducted for the evaluation had shown that units commanded by such officers, not surprisingly, had performed significantly better, from a military point of view, than those commanded by indifferent or reluctant officers. In some cases the men had lost confidence in their officers because of their abuse of alcohol. While this, of course, could create severe problems for the

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<sup>362</sup> 'PM angående pansrade fordon till Kongo' 1961-12-01, UD HP48:Kongo, The Departement of Foreign Affairs later authorized the sale. 'Angående inköp av KP-bilar för Kongobataljonen', 8/12/1961, UD HP48:Kongo; 'Angående pansarfordon till Kongo', 11/12/1961, UD HP48:Kongo.

<sup>363</sup> 'Erfarenheter från striderna i Kongo i september och december 1961.', Ast/FN Avd, F4: Vol. 2, p. 2.

Congo units, it was a problem that could be solved at home by a stricter screening process when filling the officer posts of departing battalions. Special attention should at this point be paid to the applicant's drinking habits, the evaluation suggested.<sup>364</sup> Even though not explicitly stated in the report, it could have been felt that this problem was closely related to the UN mission, since it in the end was a question of unclear motives. Officers who did not believe the risks were worth taking or felt the action unjustified in other ways were the cause of the criticism. In other words, if they just had the proper motivation, as they surely would have had in the case of an attack on the Swedish mainland, this would not be a problem.

In 1963, now with some distance in time, Wærn again wrote in *Arménytt* on the subject of 'the Swede as a soldier', referring to the Congo mission as the only source of data available to the Swedish army.<sup>365</sup> He now presented a more balanced view than in his 'battalion of heroes' article from 1961, admitting that the Swedish soldiers were not elite soldiers, but in general would compare well with such troops. Generally, Wærn wrote, the Swedish soldier was more successful as an attacker than a defender because he preferred to be active rather than passive. Furthermore, he would not be encouraged or led by exaggerated talk about patriotic duty, but wanted to know why and how specific military actions should be taken. Like the evaluation in 1962, Wærn emphasized that the 'soldier material' was generally good and that in the hands of high-quality officers, the Swedish soldiers would constitute a well-performing army.

The fighting in September and December also raised other important issues for the Army Staff: that of information and responsibility. The Army Chiefs of Staff had earlier complained that they lacked a correct and fast flow of information about the situation in the Congo. Naturally, concerned relatives as well as the media in September turned to the Army Staff or the Defence Staff for information about the dramatic events in Katanga. As members of the Swedish army now were engaged in combat in the Congo, the Defence Staff were placed in an awkward position, unable to answer questions on short notice about what had happened, and even less so what was likely to

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>365</sup> *Arménytt*, Specialnummer, 1963, pp. 2–3.

happen. While the army was well aware of its limited influence on the UN Force Commander's use of the Swedish battalion, the Defence Staff soon noticed that the relatives and media were not. 'They [the relatives] call the Defence Staff incessantly with questions on ... why the Swedish military command have put the troops in this position and why nothing is done about it', the Defence Chief of Staff, Curt Göransson, complained in a memorandum to Undén in September. 'It seems to me necessary that clear Swedish interests are forcefully guarded', Göransson wrote.<sup>366</sup> By 'Swedish interests' Göransson meant 'Swedish military interests', in the sense that the Defence Staff were worried about how and for what purposes the Swedish units were used. Even though the military command in Sweden had no control over the troops once they arrived in the Congo – and actually were explicitly forbidden to maintain direct contact with them – they expected to at least have information on what was taking place there. One might say that the Defence Staff expressed an accepted moral responsibility for the troops as well as the relatives back home. After all, Swedish soldiers were being shot dead in a war in the Congo. According to Löfgren, Göransson had predicted this dilemma early on, which he had made clear to the Ministry of Defence before the mission in 1960. For the military it had then been one of the arguments for not sending troops to the Congo at all.<sup>367</sup> One of the most disturbing facts for the Defence Staff was that Swedish civilian authorities seemed to know a lot more than the military about conditions in the Congo. Since the peacekeeping mission there had undergone a transformation into a military campaign, Göransson now requested that the Defence Staff were kept better informed about developments. By this he meant that the military wanted to be involved in the assessments, strategies and discussions on how Sweden was to act in Congo matters, and not just be informed about what had happened.<sup>368</sup> Further, he demanded that the Swedish government should appeal 'to the press to support the efforts of the Swedish units ...' since the Defence Staff apparently were unable to. Perhaps a press conference, including both representatives from the Defence Staff and the Department of Foreign Affairs, would have an effect, Göransson suggested.

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<sup>366</sup> 'VPM', 18/9/1961, UD, HP48:Kongo.

<sup>367</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 56–57.

<sup>368</sup> 'VPM', 18/9/1961, UD, HP48:Kongo.

It should be recalled that Göransson's memorandum was written in the midst of the hectic days in September, and just days before the newspapers had reported on wounded and killed Swedish soldiers. Also, days before Göransson's memorandum was sent an entire Irish UN company had surrendered to the gendarmerie forces at Jadotville, which had shown the gendarmerie's military capability and their ability to achieve victory in the field. If the Swedish battalion would have to face a similar fate or worse, it would be devastating to both the morale of the unit and public opinion. Furthermore, it would be a severe blow to the reputation of the Swedish army. This was not only a military problem but also very much a political one. To limit the risks for such a scenario and in line with his notion of guarding Swedish interests, Göransson pressed for the Swedish government to send a representative to the Congo to personally meet representatives of the UN's civilian and military headquarters.<sup>369</sup>

Another related aspect important to the army was the military's reputation; or good 'public relations', as *Arménytt* put it. 'The army needs a reputation, perhaps expressed by the words respect and confidence. That is a part of its effectiveness'.<sup>370</sup> This was one of the major reasons why the Defence Staff demanded to be kept better informed about the situation in the Congo. It was also the reason why the careful selection of men to serve with the battalions was important to the army. Since the Congo was the only place where larger Swedish units had fought, the Swedish military's performance would of course not only be evaluated by the Swedish Defence Staff but also by other powers' intelligence services. A competent and sturdy appearance would therefore serve to enhance the international military reputation and thereby also serve the national interest.<sup>371</sup>

The army's relationship with the Congo battalions, hence, had three major themes. First, the dramatic events in September were used as the material for adventure stories of war. The motives for publishing these stories are not completely clear but they filled at least three purposes. First, it was adventurous reading that most likely would appeal to the readers of

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> *Arménytt*, nr.1, 1963, p. 20.

<sup>371</sup> 'Sveriges militära FN-insatser', 1/11/1964, Ast/FN-Avd, F4, Vol. 1pp. 20–21.

*Arménytt*, Second, it must have been in line with the army's ambition to get young men to apply for service in the Congo. A large number of applicants would make it easier to form a battalion of 'good quality' soldiers. Therefore, the stories from the war were transmitting an image of UN service as a way for the individual to face the ultimate challenge and experience the greatest of all adventures: war. A third purpose was to present the performance of the Swedish soldiers stripped of all rumours concerning misconduct, or political debates on legitimacy. By placing the battlefield at the centre of attention, Swedish soldiers could act and be judged as soldiers rather than peacekeepers.

The second theme was to make use of the battalion's war experience in evaluating soldiers, officers, the chain of command and equipment. This, notably, became interesting first after the soldier had been involved in combat. As seen in *Arménytt*, the peacekeeping aspects of the mission were of little or no interest to the representatives of the army. Rather, up until September, reports from the Congo described exotic wildlife and a splendid climate. The sudden interest was, of course, connected to the *soldier* aspects of the mission and the availability of data that could help the army in its analysis of the prime purpose: national defence. The evaluation, seen from this perspective, seemed to show that the Swedish battalion, when led by competent officers, was an effective fighting force. The equipment worked well in most cases and the soldiers performed excellently in comparison with their fellow UN contingents from other countries.

The third aspect was the military's reputation. This was the army's 'public relations'. Just as the media discussed the reputation of Sweden in international affairs, the army discussed its standing in Sweden. Two factors were involved, the first involving the reputation of the military organization in relation to Swedish public opinion. The media and the soldiers' relatives demanded information about events. If the army could not deliver valid updates about how the soldiers were doing and if there was any truth to accusations of misconduct, it could serve to undermine the credibility of the Swedish defence in general. Likewise, if the Defence Staff appeared to stand idly by as Swedish soldiers were killed in the Congo, how could it be trusted as a responsible department? On the other hand, it was also a question of Sweden's military reputation, or more bluntly, Sweden's fighting ability. Viewed from such a strictly military perspective it seemed the battalion was doing well, but in September 1961 it was hard to tell how the fighting



would end. A large-scale defeat on the battlefield would most likely have been devastating for the military's reputation.

The reluctance of the Defence Staff to reinforce the troops, asserting that this would undermine the domestic defence ability, clashed with the necessity to take this measure in order to reassure relatives and the media that Sweden was doing what it could to help its fighting citizens in Africa. The solution, as Göransson saw it, was to make sure that the soldiers were never again put in such a dangerous position as had been the case in September. The Department of Foreign Affairs took Göransson's requests seriously, and shortly after the memorandum he and a representative of the government were sent to the Congo to visit various people and places in order to gather information at first hand. Reporting back to the Department of Foreign Affairs in late September, Göransson was somewhat pleased with the military reinforcements in Elizabethville but noted that subsequent battalions should possess 'more firepower'.<sup>372</sup>

### *In a state of war and psychological warfare?*

'War' is a problematic term. Not just in the sense that the term is almost impossible to define, but also in the sense that it can be defined in different ways by the same person in different situations. The term has both good and bad connotations. On the one hand, it can have a positive (or at least less negative) connotation as meaning 'forceful effort'; for example, in the sense 'war on crime'. On the other hand, war is more often used to describe a situation that includes soldiers and weapons, and as something that inevitably leads to killing, victims and suffering. The proclamation of a state of war always means that 'the gloves are off' and that the use of force, even lethal force, is imminent. This can be used in two different ways. On the one hand, it can refer to the state of war as being unjustified, chaotic, illegal and unnecessary. Here war becomes something that immediately must be ended and the offenders punished. On the other hand, war can be justified, legal and necessary as a way to end oppression or serious crime. The two ways to label a state of war are not by any means mutually exclusive. On the

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<sup>372</sup> Chiffer-Telegram N:o 65, 28/9/1961, UD, HP48:Kongo.

contrary, they usually coexist in the sense that the attack is unjustified while the defence, as the natural response to the attack, is justified.

To exclusively view war in this way, however, excludes important aspects seen from the multi-layer approach of the Congo peacekeeping mission. While war is discussed as just or unjust on a political or media level, it is also a perception of an actual state of reality in the field. For a soldier to act in a state of war is something rather different than for a politician or a journalist some 1,000 kilometres away. For the soldier the state of war means to actually be at the scene of combat; a threat to one's physical and mental health. At that level the discussion of just and unjust war takes on a different shape. The fire directed at the soldiers helped them identify the enemy and his intentions. The notion of the combat as a state of war in such a case allowed the soldiers to justify their actions. As seen in the contemporaneous stories about the September fighting in *Arménytt* above, being soldiers in a state of war allowed them to kill enemies and it allowed them to be both proud and frightened about it. This was not something to be ashamed of. In fact, both *Arménytt* and the soldiers' commanding officer celebrated their performance by calling them heroes. The state of war became a frame, in which different sets of attributes and causes of action became honoured, attributes of the warrior rather than the peacekeeper. This was in a way necessary since other options did not exist. How could their actions or conduct be explained or even remotely justified if they took place in a state of peace?

Since the UN had sent troops to the Congo in order to uphold peace in the interest of the Congolese people, to acknowledge a state of war was rhetorically impossible. This is always the case: the UN never talks about enemies or fights wars. Neither did Sweden fight a war in the Congo. This meant that the UN soldiers there could not rely on the politicians or media to use the term war in a way that supported the battalion's self-perception of loyal duty and justification in a state of war. This did not mean that the battalions lacked political support in general from Sweden. As shown, they did not. What it meant, however, was that the political turmoil surrounding the fightings became problematic for the battalions. On the one hand, the UN troops were implementing the resolutions of February (and November) by assuring themselves free mobility in Elizabethville. On the other hand, they fought a war in the city. Since neither the UN nor the Swedish government spoke of war as something that occurred in Katanga, this

became a term used mainly by UN critics to underline the questionable legality of the operation, or used by the press to underline the severity and drama of the situation. For the battalion, hence, it became problematic to speak of 'war' as members of the UN personnel. It would only add to the image of cruelty, bloodshed and suffering in the Congo while at the same time acting to reinforce the arguments of the anti-UN opinion or increasing the anxiety of relatives back home. At the same time, as argued above, the term 'war' would enable the soldiers to identify the situation as a task different from that of peacekeeping. The ideal image of a soldier at war is something very different to a peacekeeper at work. The soldiers' duty during the fighting was to achieve the military goals by attacking and if necessary killing the enemy. The soldiers at war were also targets themselves, which in turn morally justified the killing of enemies. The rightful killing therefore needed the context of war to be defensible.

The Swedish public got their information about the combat events mainly through the printed media, which also effectively added to the images of war and suffering in Katanga by depicting scenes of combat and destruction in Elizabethville. On 15 September *Aftonbladet*, for instance, wrote:

Field artillery and tanks stand abandoned by the Katangan soldiers. It is estimated that more than 100 men from the Katangan army and about 20 of the UN troops have been killed in action. An extraordinary confusion prevails in Elizabethville and conflicting rumours float through the air. All electric power is shut down and just about all communications have ceased to work. The streets are lined with burned-out remains of different UN vehicles that the Katangan troops set fire to during their counter-attack on Wednesday evening. In one of the wreckages still lie the burned corpses of two Irish UN soldiers.<sup>373</sup>

Such descriptions of the situation in Katanga undoubtedly created unease among Swedish readers, and especially so among the many relatives of those

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<sup>373</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 15/9/1961.

serving in the battalions. As seen above, the Defence Staff received many questions from concerned relatives, as did Erlander personally.<sup>374</sup> While descriptions like the one above were plentiful and certainly enough to convey the atmosphere of warfare, even more worrying stories found their way into the newspapers. The Katangan regime had employed experts in propaganda and misleading information, which further reinforced the images of a chaotic Elizabethville in the Western media. The purpose of the propaganda attacks was to raise world opinion against the UN in the Congo in order to help Katanga's struggle for independence. One such strategy was to paint an exaggerated image whereby the UN was losing the battles in Katanga at terrible costs in terms of dead UN soldiers. For instance, on 16 September readers of *Svenska Dagbladet* could see the following in this morning paper:

Katangese forces, under the command of white officers, on Friday launched a major offensive including fighter planes, tanks and mortars, against the UN troops. At Camp Kamina, which is defended by 400 Swedes and Irishmen, hard fighting took place, which is feared to have cost many lives. Regular [Katangan] forces that are superior in numbers and armaments and backed by tribal warriors now surround the UN soldiers. The UN is throwing in reinforcements by air to the threatened base, mainly two Swedish companies from Leopoldville. The 150-men-strong Irish UN force in Jadodville is said to have surrendered to the Katangese units after more than 50 of their men had fallen in battle. The UN cannot confirm whether the survivors in Jadotville have surrendered or not. In Elizabethville, where confused fighting rages, the UN has imposed a curfew.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Sven Erlander (ed.) (2011), p. 142.

<sup>375</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/9/1961. While the main parts of the story were true, some were not. The forces attacking Kamina were not superior and no tanks were used. The Irish company in Jadotville did surrender, but the supposed numbers of fallen soldiers were wildly exaggerated.

While the situation was indeed warlike and confusing, the numbers of dead UN soldiers and enemies were exaggerated. In part the attacks were also directed towards the states that were contributing soldiers, by accusing their troops of either excessive brutality or being scared. Examples of headlines in connection with the September fighting are 'Terrified UN-Swedes want to leave service in Katanga', 'Fifty-six Irishmen killed' and 'Katanga: 30 Swedish deserters'.<sup>376</sup> This was supposed to undermine public and political support and in the end result in the withdrawal of soldiers from the Congo. The propaganda worked very well, to Wærn's dissatisfaction, and he complained several times in his reports. In March 1962 he wrote:

Even though the UN denies the exaggerations and lies, there remains a sense of 'no smoke without fire'. ... The unknown man who heads the propaganda for Tshombe is both good and ruthless. He early on realized that a propaganda lie always has an effect, even if it is denied 100 times.<sup>377</sup>

The suggestion that Sweden had become a target for psychological warfare worried the Defence Staff. Telegrams and articles which described terrified Swedish soldiers deserting in large numbers caused Göransson to hastily return to Elizabethville in late September.<sup>378</sup> On the scene he could conclude that most reports were misleading or even blatant lies. In a telegram to the Department of Foreign Affairs he verified Wærn's claim of systematic and organized psychological warfare being directed towards the troop-contributing countries.<sup>379</sup> For the Defence Staff and Department of Foreign Affairs, worries caused by the spread of misinformation and propaganda through the Swedish media were not limited to the Congo crisis. The dissemination of misinformation had also uncovered a weakness in the civil

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<sup>376</sup> 'FN-aktionen i Katanga under september 1961. En studie rörande nyhetsförmedlingen i svensk press', Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet. Februari 1962. In UD HP48:Kongo, p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> Kongorapport, no. 4, XIVK, 31/3/1962, p. 3.

<sup>378</sup> See, for instance, *Aftonbladet*, 15/9/1961; Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), p. 248.

<sup>379</sup> 'Från Dalman Göransson summarisk redovisning', coded telegram from Bengt Rösiö to the Departement of Foreign Affairs, 28/9/1961, in UD HP48:Kongo.

defence against psychological warfare in general. This led The Emergency Advisory Committee on Psychological Warfare to instruct that a study be conducted of the Swedish news service from the Congo during the September hostilities. The task was given to the Department of Political Science at Gothenburg University and was concluded in February 1962. The study, that followed a quantitative methodology, showed that the Swedish print-based media had in fact produced more UN-negative news than UN-positive news, while during the same period for most of the time politically declaring themselves positive to the UN agenda in the Congo.<sup>380</sup> The study by no means answered any questions on psychological warfare, and Göransson thought it pointless.<sup>381</sup> For the purpose of this study, however, the report clearly lends weight to the proposition that in the eyes of the battalion collectively, commendatory articles on how the Swedish soldiers performed their UN duties were more important than having political and moral support for what they were doing. To further argue this point, a notable exception should be emphasized.

*Dagens Nyheter's* Sven Öste was in December reporting from Elizabethville. Even though his articles described hatred and war in the city, accusing both the UN and the gendarmerie of unnecessary violence and military mistakes, Wærn liked them. The battalion commander and his staff seemed not to have had any problems with news stories about war, killing or victims as long as these, in their eyes, were truthful and fact-based articles. The contact with Öste, Wærn later wrote, was a blessing since:

[w]e, through Öste, could dismantle many of the propaganda statements. Öste's articles, which sometimes also were critical of the UN, were characterized by an objectivity that we in the longer run would profit from.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> 'FN-aktionen i Katanga under september 1961. En studie rörande nyhetsförmedlingen i svensk press', Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet. Februari 1962. In UD HP48:Kongo; See also Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 250–251.

<sup>381</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), p. 251.

<sup>382</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 349.

This, in fact, correlates well with earlier findings. First and foremost, many of Öste's articles included the explicit presence of the Swedish soldiers who had spoken directly with him. The articles described how the soldiers prepared for, and executed, military missions in the city during the month of December. Overall, the Swedish soldiers in Öste's articles were portrayed as confident, in control and ready to do what had to be done.<sup>383</sup> Secondly, the articles made a clear distinction between political and battalion military matters. This allowed the Swedish battalion's actions, or inactions, to appear legitimate given the political climate. In that context the soldiers of the battalion efficiently, courageously and with a high degree of discipline were doing the job that had been given to them by the UN. The job itself, the larger UN policy or strategies in Katanga, could then, by Öste, be questioned and debated separately from the responsibilities of the battalion. Days before Operation Unokat, Öste wrote:

And the uncertainty of what the UN policies will come to be is strengthened by the accounts of the Swedish battalions. One can be pleased that the cautious war limits the Swedish losses, but the dilemma remains clear: what will such a war come to, and how will the UN get out of this emergency situation?<sup>384</sup>

Thirdly, and because of the separation between the military actions by the Swedish battalions and the policies of the UN, Öste portrayed a different kind of state of war in Elizabethville than many other journalists: in a way the same kind of state of war that had been seen in *Arménytt* in September, explaining how soldiers performed as separated from the 'why' of their actions. The aspects of the 'how' and the 'why' will be further discussed below.

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<sup>383</sup> See, for instance, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12/12/1961 and 13/12/1961.

<sup>384</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 13/12/1961.

### *The battalions during Morthor and Unokat*

Besides the dangers of combat itself, the fighting in September posed many problems for Wærn, and the battalion. The events in Elizabethville had created a disturbance throughout the nodes of analysis. In an instant the UN troops in Katanga changed character, from being an international peacekeeping force to an international fighting force. The objectives of the Morthor operation had been geographical in the sense that it was supposed to 'seize, hold and control' important buildings and positions in Elizabethville, rather than fight the opposition. In trying to achieve the operation goals peacefully, the UN had warned Tshombe beforehand and thereby forfeited the element of surprise. Also, at the chosen buildings ultimatums to the gendarmerie in them were conveyed via megaphones. Regardless of who fired the first shot, during the following days Elizabethville turned into a warzone in which the Swedish battalion played an active part. The news reports from the Congo described a chaotic war, while the politicians insisted in calling the work of the battalion 'of police nature'.<sup>385</sup> The different interpretations created friction. At the epicentre of the disorders between the analytic nodes stood the civilian and military UN leadership in the city. In his book Wærn claims he could foresee this conflict: '[T]he world demanded that the UN soldiers should be a cross-breed between a peace dove and a good soldier – with the overwhelming number of chromosomes of the peace dove'. The UN troops were therefore destined to lose any military confrontation politically and morally even though they were able to win it operationally.<sup>386</sup> While Morthor had been a success in terms of 'seized, held and controlled' sites in Elizabethville, it was a failure in the sense that the UN units had been forced to fulfil their objectives by force. Likewise, it had been a success, according to Wærn, in the sense that the men had performed as disciplined, brave and effective soldiers, while at the same time it had been a failure in the sense that they had not succeeded in being an international police force.

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<sup>385</sup> 'Interpellationssvar avgivet av utrikesminister Undén den 15 december i riksdagens andra kammare', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, Kungliga utrikesministeriet, Stockholm 1962, p. 65.

<sup>386</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 170–171.



This also meant that *Djungeltelegrafen* could not use terms like ‘enemy’ or ‘war’ during the fighting in September. In general, both the Congo Reports and *Djungeltelegrafen* used different sets of words to describe the events. The fighting was often referred to as ‘the stress’, ‘the fighting’ or ‘fighting events’ and seldom as a war. Still, this did not hinder *Djungeltelegrafen* from sometimes labelling the gendarmerie and its mercenaries ‘enemies’ and writing that the wounded Swedish soldiers had suffered ‘warwounds’.<sup>387</sup> As noted earlier, *Djungeltelegrafen* had to walk a very ‘thin line’. On the one hand, it needed to build ‘teamspirit’ within the battalion. The September combat had, with brutal clarity, shown that the peacekeeping mission in Katanga could sometimes best be categorized as a local war in which the Swedish soldier had to participate. It also meant that the ‘teamspirit’ had to include a mental preparedness to fight again if necessary. On the other hand, the paper at the same time had to adhere to the UN ideals of neutrality and non-interference, however distant this sometimes must have seemed. Immediately after the September fighting there really was not much to celebrate within the battalion. The gendarmerie had offered fiercer resistance than expected, the battle had achieved no political gains for the UN, very little praise had come from the Swedish media, and two Swedish soldiers had lost their lives. There really was no victory. In other words, there was not much from the September fighting to bolster the ‘teamspirit’. Wærn also saw that this affected the battalion, noting in his September report:

The acts of combat and the thereby obvious mortal danger, have ... been an eye-opener for many. Some have also evidently felt confused and hesitant about the UN’s Katanga politics. In this context it should be noted that the requests for private talks with the chief of section III and the battalion priest, have significantly increased in numbers ...<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> E.g. *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 1, XIVK, no date, 1961, pp. 1, 9; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 11; Kongorapporten, nr. 1, XIVK, 31/12/1961, pp. 6, 17.

<sup>388</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIIC, 30/9/1961, p. 26.

The world media seemed to believe that the UN had acted irresponsibly or even illegally. The battalion had, according to Wærn, become an object of public smearing.<sup>389</sup> Furthermore, the UN had achieved very little with the operation. Addressing his soldiers in the first edition of *Djungeltelegraf* since the September fighting, Wærn, as he also did in *Arménytt*, therefore turned to soldiery in and of itself as grounds for pride.

I am grateful and proud of your efforts during the fightings in Elizabethville and Kamina. You have done well as soldiers in your first battle. I am especially happy about how you, during the hard combat, have kept your sense of responsibility and good judgment and throughout behaved correctly.<sup>390</sup>

*Djungeltelegraf* further pointed to the effectiveness and courage of the battalion as a fighting unit as something very honourable. The fact that fourteen Swedish soldiers had been recommended for bravery medals by the Indian and Irish contingents was mentioned as proof thereof. The commander seemed to have no or little doubt that the Swedish soldiers would again form a good, effective and reliable fighting unit if needed. In other words, the collective motive for war-fighting seemed to be present. Nevertheless, the fighting in September had evidently shaken the collective motive for peacekeeping in the Congo; that is the way the UN political goals of peace and humanity were carried out. From interviews with some members of the returning 12th Battalion in December, the MPI concluded that less than 25 per cent of the respondents believed they had received enough information about what the UN's goals were in the Congo or what had caused the fighting.<sup>391</sup> In other words, the willingness and ability to fight if necessary had to be driven mainly by something else: the 'teamspirit'

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<sup>389</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 236.

<sup>390</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 11–12, XIK, 20/10/1961, p. 1.

<sup>391</sup> Walter Korpi & Ruth Nisbel, 'Stridsreaktioner samt informations- och propagandaverksamhet vid ett förband under fältförhållanden. Redogörelse från en försöksundersökning genomförd i den XII svenska FN-bataljonen, MPI, Specialrapport Nr. 4, May 1962', p. 13.

itself. This is, as Resic has argued, a common, or even classic, phenomenon among soldiers in wars. Soldiers who feel distanced from the political motives and causes of conflict tend to turn their loyalty and sense of duty towards the primary group, which is the unit itself. ‘Camaraderie’ was by far the most common answer to the MPI’s question of what had caused most satisfaction during the time of service.<sup>392</sup> Fighting for the survival of one’s ‘brothers-in-arms’, rather than any other cause, hence, spurs combat motivation. In this way, Resic argues, the goals of the conflict ‘become secondary to the wellbeing of the primary group.’<sup>393</sup> While this does not hamper the willingness or ability to fight, or military effectiveness, it still might have devastating consequences for a military mission, and certainly so for a peacekeeping mission. In order to guard the well-being of the primary group, the main objective must be to defend it against anyone who wants to see it damaged. Hence, the threats need to be identified and formulated, which for the combat unit means to build resentment or even hatred of the enemy. For a peacekeeping unit combat is an anomaly, and it cannot be allowed to trigger such an effect since this would severely restrain the ability to do the peacekeeping part of the work. The battalion command could not endorse an enemy construction of this kind. The Swedish Congo battalion therefore needed to resume the peacekeeping role perception. To be able to do that, there could be no hatred of an enemy. While celebrating the battalion’s performance *as soldiers* during battle, Wærn seemed to be well aware that the soldiers needed to step out of that role perception to become peacekeepers once again; something he noted in *Djungeltelegrafen*:

This brings me to a word of warning for coming months. Fondly cherish your fair attitude towards our possible adversaries if you once again will be put to the test. Respect human dignity and respect the property of others – even in the heat of the battle.

It is also easy to become ‘tough’ and brag after a completed battle. Avoid that attitude! Don’t think of your adversaries as all evil.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>393</sup> Sanimir Resic (1999), pp. 223, 244–245; Joanna Bourke (2000), pp. 141–146, 151–52.

<sup>394</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11–12, XIIC, 20/10/1961, p. 1.

Whether Wærn was foreseeing a potential problem or reacting to an already existing one is hard to tell. There was a need for every soldier in the battalion to take a step back and ‘throw away fixed judgments’ about how people ‘are’, Wærn continued. The mental result of the combat should not be an even greater appreciation of conditions in Sweden, but rather a renewed interest for, and understanding of, the international problems that existed in the Congo. If such an interest had been lost, it was the ‘duty as a UN soldier’ to find it again.<sup>395</sup>

Unlike earlier, *Djungeltelegrafen* in the following months refrained from commenting on politics in Katanga. Instead, the number of articles praising the battalion increased. Also, according to *Djungeltelegrafen*, over 300 men of the 12th Battalion, despite the combat they had endured, had applied for service with the incoming 14th Battalion, which was due to begin its tour of duty in the early days of December.<sup>396</sup> Around a hundred men were finally assigned to the new battalion, which made it consist of about 15 per cent veterans.

The new battalion had only just arrived in Elizabethville when it was thrown into combat action in early December. By now the UN political goal of reuniting the Katangan province with the rest of the Congo had become more publicly accepted and also explicitly expressed in the Security Council’s Resolution of 24 November. The Security Council was now ‘*completely rejecting* the claim that Katanga is a “sovereign independent nation”’, stating that the Katangan ‘secessionist activities’ were indeed illegal.<sup>397</sup> Whether the UN had breached its mandate in the Congo or not was still up for debate in the media, but for the UN troops in Elizabethville there now existed a clear, politically backed military objective: to stop the secession and incorporate Katanga into the rest of the Congo, if necessary by force. Tshombe’s refusal to cooperate made him and his gendarmerie legitimate objects of attack.

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid., pp. 1–2.

<sup>396</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 13, XLIK, 27/10/1961, p. 8.

<sup>397</sup> S/5002, UN Security Council Resolution 169, November 24, 1961, notably with two abstentions: France and the UK.

After the fightings in December, *Djungeltelegrafen* adopted a 'sharper tone'. Now it acknowledged that the Swedish battalion had fought a war in Katanga. Articles describing what different parts of the battalion had experienced during the short war started to appear.<sup>398</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* also criticized those who made unfavourable comments about the battalion's work. An article of this nature in the newspaper *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* in December 1961 prompted *Djungeltelegrafen* to comment. *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* had interviewed a Swedish pilot who had served in the UN as a transport pilot for six weeks. He was now a member of the Katanga Lobby and had signed a petition aimed at the UN and the Swedish government protesting against the use of fighter planes in Katanga:

Sweden sent J 29s to the Congo. One was told that the fighters were to be used as protection for UN air transports, about which there is nothing say. ... Later messages appeared telling that both jets and bomberplanes had been used against troop transports and other targets. ... I believe people in Sweden have all reason to remember that the UN, with its airpower, has an overwhelming superiority. ... Was it, during these circumstances, really necessary to use aircraft against opponents that have no resources by which to protect themselves, have no anti-aircraft and that in vain fire their rifles against the fast-flying jet planes?<sup>399</sup>

In response, *Djungeltelegrafen* obviously felt that the situation in Katanga was deeply misunderstood by some people at home and thus needed to be clarified. It was one thing to criticize the UN's motives or direct blame towards the UN civilian representatives. Such criticism was of course unwelcome, but could be treated as not directed at the soldiers themselves. To criticize the way the soldiers performed, however, was unacceptable. The

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<sup>398</sup> See 'Elddopet', in *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 8–9; or 'Med luftvärnet i Kongo', *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 4–5.

<sup>399</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 2; *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, 22/12/1961.

first aspect was politics, an acceptable domain for the media. What happened in the streets of Elizabethville was war, something the media had little knowledge of. It was obvious, *Djungeltelegrafen* commented, that the writer of the article in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* had never been targeted by mortar fire. Moreover, the UN had never, in contrast to the gendarmerie, used bomberplanes. The UN planes had only fired with cannon, *Djungeltelegrafen* was anxious to point out. Furthermore, the assistance the fighter planes could offer was welcomed for the very reason that Swedish soldiers were at war:

One can have humanitarian views on UN activity. Here in Katanga, however, it has been war. ... War by all means – we can show dumdbullets made in Camp Massart. It is in violation of the Geneva Convention but perhaps not against [the captain's] opinion.<sup>400</sup>

To further demonstrate the presence of war, *Djungeltelegrafen* made sure to add that, while they were fighting the gendarmerie, they were also protecting the civilians. The paper pointed to the aid the planes brought the Baluba. 'When the Baluba found out that it was UN planes, they all came out cheering and shouting with joy'.<sup>401</sup>

The criticism of Belgian, French and British support of Katanga also increased. As an example *Djungeltelegrafen* chose to reprint an article under the headline 'The UN at War with a Mining Company', earlier published in the weekly Swedish magazine *Idun*. It described how influential people in Brussels and London had backed Tshombe and his Katangan government from the outset of the conflict. Their main interest had been the Katangan copper mining company Union Minière, in which they had substantial investments. The company had been Tshombe's economic foundation and was also used by the gendarmerie and mercenaries as a base of operations in

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<sup>400</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 1–2. Dumdbullets are particularly nasty, self-expanding bullets outlawed in war since 1899.

<sup>401</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 1.

Elizabethville. Consequently, Swedish jets had attacked it during the December War. The article clearly showed the link between the Katangan revolt and economic interests in Brussels in a way that *Djungeltelegrafen* believed to be 'a good overview of the mining company's ... role in the Congo politics.'<sup>402</sup>

The UN's show of force in December, unlike in September, seemed to have led to some political progress, from the UN's point of view. This allowed, at least to some extent, *Djungeltelegrafen* to again talk politics and revive the political motives for peacekeeping. In January 1962, Tshombe made a speech during a party with UN representatives in which he underlined Katanga's and the Congo's appreciation for the organization's work in the country, viewing the future in bright terms. *Djungeltelegrafen* commented:

It undoubtedly seemed that he meant what he said ... . It is also likely the case that Tshombe's attitude towards the UN and the central government in Leo is determined more in London, Paris and Brussels than by himself. Perhaps have the idea ... on a united Congo become positive, when they [the European investors] realized that the UN meant business last December. ... Let us now hope ... that we can return to the real purpose of the peace force, which is to, through [its] mere presence, guarantee law and order. If this expectation [is actually realized], then our fallen and wounded comrades – Swedes and others – shall not have sacrificed themselves in vain ... .<sup>403</sup>

To bring Tshombe and his government to its knees and make it willing to cooperate with the UN agenda was the only way that would lead to a situation where the UN troops could resume their work of promoting peaceful stability and order, it was argued. The war in December had therefore been a necessary step. In that context, the deaths of the Swedish soldiers were clearly connectable with a political and humanitarian goal and therefore came to make some sense. The fallen soldiers had, then, after all, fought in a war and had not died in vain.

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<sup>402</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 3, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 1–2, 5.

<sup>403</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 5, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 1.

The planned offensive during the operations in December was politically backed by the November resolution. This seems to have made it far more acceptable for *Djungeltelegrafen* to discuss questions relating to soldiering and war than was ever the case in September. *Djungeltelegrafen* also touched upon several aspects of war after the December combat. One common theme was the aspect of soldiery *in* combat and soldiery *after* combat; in a way a continuation of Wærn's line of argument in September. A soldier seldom wants to be in a potentially lethal combat situation. On the other hand, soldiers that had been in such a situation, and physically and mentally survived, actually appreciated what they had been through. In a *Djungeltelegrafen* interview, soldiers of the Swedish mortar platoon discussed why this was so.<sup>404</sup> The combat had given them a valuable experience. They now knew what war was. For them it had been a test of whether they would overcome their fears personally, but also as a team. They had passed the test gallantly and now the 'unity and camaraderie welds them together and makes them soldiers that will not yield in battle.' The actions in combat, both on a personal and a collective level, remained as a source of reflection after the clashes. In this respect it was clear that peacekeeping was not the same as war-fighting. A war is still a war, even though it at times lacks actual combat. The end of a battle in a war does not mean the end of that war; for peacekeepers, however, it does. The attributes of the warrior soldier are courage, loyalty and efficiency in battle, and as Wærn had pointed out in September: a fighting UN soldier must be able to instantly become a peacekeeper again as soon as the combat is over. This dilemma was also raised in *Djungeltelegrafen* in January:

To in a battle be distanced from emotions appears natural, but in the vacuum after the battle? Then we touch on one of the big questions about the mouldability of the human being. How far can she go in her adaptability? Can she be moulded into an emotionless robot, a function whose only purpose is efficiency, perfection and absoluteness? Or is she, despite her ... acting, aware of what she as a human being is doing? If it is so, it must be in her subconscious to

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<sup>404</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 5.



repress those thoughts deep inside her during the battle. Let us hope that such feelings still exist.<sup>405</sup>

The problem raised by *Djungeltelegrafen* was not the difference between peacekeeping and war-fighting, as based on any legal or political definition or evaluation of factual circumstances in the field, but rather the mental and individual difference between the two. The text characterizes the ideal warrior as an efficient and 'emotionless robot' almost unaware about what he is doing. But once the battle ends, the robot must again find his emotions, whichever they might be, or humanity will slowly perish. Fear during combat, a truly human emotion, was therefore seen as a healthy trait.

Courage is not a lack of fear, but the determination to solve one's assignment despite fear. ... There are desperadoes. The name says it all: a desperate, hopeless human being, a man who is ... indifferent of what happens to him. He can surely do extraordinary things in combat. But he has no courage, because courage is a moral quality, unachievable for the desperate. One has to be scared to be courageous.<sup>406</sup>

Through the articles following the December War, an ideal peacekeeper role model becomes detectable; a peacekeeping role model based on the experiences of war. In it the peacekeeper had traits that the warrior lacked. The peacekeeper was a protecting and helping force: patient and reasonable, and always aware that he was responsible for his actions. His goal was to keep the peace through law and order, and his duty was to execute this goal to the best of his ability. He had no enemies. The warrior, on the other hand, had enemies; enemies who tried to kill him. He was a legitimate killer with his emotions tucked away for later. He acted on instincts gained from his military training, and his actions should be seen in the light of the context of war. *Djungeltelegrafen* not surprisingly pointed to the battalion as

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<sup>405</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>406</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 5, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 2.

very capable of both war-fighting and peacekeeping, but implicitly acknowledged the difference between them and also admitted that moving from one to the other might be problematic both for the individual and the collective.

### *The whys and the hows*

In attempting to dissect the structure of the relationship between the nodes of analysis, it can be useful to speak of the 'whys' and the 'hows' and their impact on each other. As has been discussed in the chapters above, there exists an interesting dynamic in the relationship between how (or the description of how) the soldiers acted during combat, on the one hand, and why (or the description of why) they did so, on the other. Such an analytic division would help explain the different contexts that framed the experiences of the 10th Battalion in January and the 12th/14th Battalions in September and December.

While political opinion expressed through the media and the government justified military action, as it did during the ambushes in late 1960 and early 1961, there was little discussion, debate or defence regarding the 'whys'. The focus by the media and public opinion was rather placed on how that military action was executed. This created space for the soldiers' performances in – and experiences of – battle to appear in the media. In that case it was also understood that what the soldiers did, they did to achieve a result that had been deemed legitimate beforehand. This meant that they could step into the role of being soldiers, as public opinion and the media accepted the killing of enemies and even celebrated the effectiveness and professionalism of it. This is the way in which the role perception of the peacekeeper becomes accepted as the role perception of the soldier. Or, to recall Haaland's notion of military role models, the 'core values' and 'main emphasis' shift to become more that of the Warrior, celebrating professionalism, loyalty, heroism and duty. As seen above, this worked well for the 10th Battalion whose defensive fighting along the railway tracks was generally admired by the press. In other words: it was supported by the cultural foundation. In turn, it gave the battalion collective the support it needed to endure and even be proud of its service. Admittedly, Kjellgren vigorously pointed out that even more could be done by Sweden in this respect, like awarding the soldiers medals or reinforcing the battalion with

weapons and personnel, but in general the 10th Battalion seemed not to have any major problems with defining its role in the Congo.

In September and December the situation was very different. This time the 'why' was widely contested by many of the foreign media, most significantly in Great Britain and Belgium. Even though the Swedish media never drew the conclusion that what the UN had done was illegal or even wrong – on the contrary, most of the time they supported the UN action – they still printed statements from the anti-UN press. If nothing else, Swedish newspapers had to do so in order to dismiss the criticism. Either way, the simple fact that the contested 'why' to a large extent became a main theme regarding the fighting in the printed media led to little room being left for the soldiers of the 12th and 14th Battalions to be admired as those of the 10th Battalion had been. Meanwhile, in Elizabethville the battalions themselves, focusing strongly on the 'how' and less on the 'why', felt abandoned. The soldiers had stepped into the 'warrior role perception' while the media had not. In other words, from the battalions' perspective the Swedish media missed the army's 'finest hour', debating instead the question of 'why'. A contested 'why' also leads to a less accepting attitude towards the 'how'. Even if the soldiers performed professionally and disciplined, with a great sense of duty and executing orders precisely, as Wærn argued they did, there was still an unspoken suspicion that the combat might have been unnecessary or even illegal from the outset. It was very clear that many foreign newspapers thought so. The media's unwillingness to let the Swedish soldiers in the Congo step into the role perception of the Warrior in September and December, and praise the fulfilment of that role, instead led the media and with them public opinion to ask: 'Is this really what Swedish peacekeepers ought to do?'<sup>407</sup>

From the battalion's point of view, the combat seemed to raise the same questions among some of the soldiers. The battalion had, however, actually fought a war in September and December. This alone, irrespective of any

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<sup>407</sup> In fact, this correlates well with the problems that Rubinstein observes in recent missions: 'I think that an important reason why peacekeeping is in trouble is that new missions have too often worked outside of the core meanings of the symbol of peacekeeping. They have come close to, if not crossed, the edge of what the root metaphor can support.' Robert A. Rubinstein (2008), p. 137.

political discussions on motive and legality, called for recognition, praise and support. It called for recognition by the Swedish media, which was not forthcoming. Instead, as shown above, in the cases where the soldiers' actions were described, the media painted a gloomy picture of confusion, suspicion of misconduct, excessive violence or mental breakdown in the field. Wærn remembered that the Irish UN soldiers had problems understanding the behaviour of the Swedish media:

'Don't they know in Sweden that you have a tough time', the Irish asked. 'Don't they understand that you need to feel confidence?' We suffered from being hunted like animals in Swedish newspapers, when we had our hardest times.<sup>408</sup>

The lack of support felt by the battalion members became even more conspicuous as they compared themselves with contingents from other countries and what the media in their respective home countries printed about them.

[W]hen UN soldiers from some other country do something, then that country boasts about it so it can be heard allover the world. When a Swedish UN soldier makes a brave effort (and many have) it is simply noted that he has done his duty.<sup>409</sup>

Not only was the political support insufficient in times of war, according to *Djungeltelegrafen*. The government, or as it was put, 'people with responsibility', did not do enough to refute the accusations and lies printed in Swedish papers, such as descriptions of Swedes as being undisciplined murderers.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 421.

<sup>409</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 16, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 3.

<sup>410</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 16, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 2.

### *Mercenary enemies*

In order for war to be justified, or arguably even exist, it needs enemies to defeat and victims to protect. As the conflict intensified during the summer and autumn of 1961 it had become clear, both to the Swedish public and the battalions in Elizabethville, that the potential enemy was the Katangan gendarmerie. The gendarmerie was, unlike the Baluba soldiers, equipped with modern weapons, organized in military units and had access to heavy weapons and vehicles. In other words, they posed a far more severe military threat than the Baluba. Set to guard the independence of Katanga, a military conflict between the UN troops and the gendarmerie was in the offing. As seen above in the March 1961 *SE* article, this was also clear to the Swedish media. A significant and much hated part of the gendarmerie was its European mercenaries.

In 1960, when Tshombe had proclaimed the independent Katanga, opposition mainly among the Baluba tribes in northern Katanga had escalated to violent resistance. In order to raise an army of his own on short notice, he hired available Belgian and French military advisers who in turn hired staff to help organize the gendarmerie. According to Anthony Mockler, a few military officers from mainly Belgium and France and also soon from Britain came to substantially influence the Katangan government as well as the field command in the gendarmerie. The early mercenaries started recruiting volunteers abroad, who often assumed that they would serve as policemen in Elizabethville. They earned £100–£180 a month and served for a period of six months.<sup>411</sup> Many of them had left a military career within their respective national forces, among them the French forces in Algeria. The mercenaries had, however, not primarily been hired to fight the UN. Their mission was to train, organize and lead Tshombe's gendarmerie in the conflict with the Baluba opposition and the invading Congolese Army. UN politics in Katanga, however, made Tshombe identify the UN as a threat to Katangan independence, and the subsequent friction between the UN troops and the gendarmerie soon also made the mercenaries part of that conflict. Even though relatively few in number (some 500 or so), the mercenaries posed many problems as well as created some opportunities.

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<sup>411</sup> Anthony Mockler (1970), pp. 157–168.

When the mercenaries first appeared in the Congo it came as a shock to the public, according to Mockler. Paid killers who profited from war and misery could not earn anything but a bad reputation.<sup>412</sup> That being said, they were sometimes hard to separate from the 'military advisers' working for the Katangan regime; people who still had ties to their home countries. The UN argued along the same lines and had, in fact, from the outset of the operation in Katanga blamed much of the chaos on the mercenaries and other military advisers. The February resolution had stated:

[M]easures [should] be taken for the immediate withdrawal and evacuation from the Congo of all Belgian and other foreign military personnel and political advisers not under the United Nations Command, and mercenaries.<sup>413</sup>

Furthermore, all member states were called upon to prevent their nationals from falling into any of these categories. Whenever possible, UN troops began capturing and deporting mercenaries. After interviewing a handful of captured mercenaries in early 1961, a UN official reported to the Secretary General:

The information obtained confirmed that non-Congolese military personnel, whether serving in mercenary units or as officers and NCOs of mixed units, formed the backbone of the military operations in Katanga ... . [The captured mercenaries], composed of experienced and disciplined soldiers, seemed to have supplied the elite necessary for this type of military operation.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., pp. 143–146. During the later 1960s the 'Myth of the Mercenaries' as some sort of adventurous and brave entrepreneurs balanced the picture somewhat.

<sup>413</sup> S/4741, UN Security Council Resolution 161, 21 February 1961.

<sup>414</sup> S/4790 'Report to the Secretary-General from his acting Special Representative in the Congo concerning the interrogation of thirty mercenaries apprehended in Kabalo on 7 April 1961', 14/4/1961.

Since the mercenaries were viewed as a major cause of instability in Katanga, it was also in order to fulfil the February resolution that the UN launched the Rumpunch and Morthor operations, actively searching out and apprehending mercenaries. After the fighting in September, that clearly had involved mercenaries not accepting deportation, the Security Council hardened its formulations further in the November resolution. By now the mercenaries had become more or less synonymous with the Katangan secession itself, and the two were almost seen as mutually dependent.

[The Security Council] strongly deprecates the secessionist activities illegally carried out by the provincial administration of Katanga, with the aid of external resources and manned by foreign mercenaries.<sup>415</sup>

When combat again broke out in Elizabethville, Jadotville and Kamina, the problematic mercenaries were targeted as the primary enemy. On a political level the 'white mercenaries' were seen as the root of all evil. Not only did they orchestrate the Katangan rebellion and fight the UN and thereby Swedish soldiers, they were also believed to 'mislead the poor black men' in the gendarmerie into sacrificing their lives in vain. Undén himself made that clear in a radio speech on 18 September, part of which appeared the following day in *Aftonbladet*:

The recent fighting in the Congo that has caused us so many worries seems essentially to have been caused by a few hundred white officers that systematically have sought to sabotage the UN's work for peace. ... It is bitter to note that these irresponsible elements have been able to exercise a real reign of terror and excite the black soldiers and gendarmerie against the UN ...<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> S/5002, UN Security Council Resolution 169, 24 November 1961.

<sup>416</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 19/9/1961.

Those ‘few hundred white officers’, *Aftonbladet* made sure to add, ‘are mainly Belgians and French’. The presence of the mercenaries, however, also created some good political arguments. First, to fight and kill mercenaries was not a great political problem. They had volunteered to fight the UN and were described as ‘scum’ or ‘desperadoes’ by the media.<sup>417</sup> They could easily be linked to the chaotic situation in Katanga in that they made the oppressive regime possible. Furthermore, they were thought to act as instructors in a way that misled the native soldiers of the gendarmerie into opposing the UN. Hence, the young Congolese serving with the gendarmerie were sometimes depicted as propaganda victims rather than enemies. Even the UN downplayed Tshombe’s role in the September fighting. On 15 September, the military adviser of the Secretary General, General Rikhye, reported to the involved UN delegates that he believed Tshombe had no control or power in Elizabethville but was firmly in the hands of ‘ultra whites’ who were in charge. The Swedish delegate to the UN, Agda Rössel, reported that ‘Rikhye wanted to press the fact that there existed no resistance from civilian or military Katangeses as such. All resistance was led and inspired by mercenaries.’ It was suggested that this was further proven by the fact that in places where there were no foreign mercenaries to lead the gendarmerie, there were no hostilities.<sup>418</sup> To fight the mercenaries, both rhetorically and in reality, therefore became a way to fight the Katangan regime without doing so directly.

For the Swedish left-wing media, headed by *Aftonbladet*, the fierce resistance from the mercenaries, and the outcry against the UN in Belgian media, came as proof of the Katangan conflict being all about the capitalists’ threatened interests and the neo-colonialists’ hurt pride. For *Aftonbladet*, these were the true enemies. In fact, the only voice of reason in Belgium was from the socialist government, however a voice all too weak to be heard.<sup>419</sup> In this context, all the rumours about the UN and UN soldiers being violators of human rights in the Congo sounded false, coming as they did

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<sup>417</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 21/9/1961.

<sup>418</sup> ‘Telegram from Swedish UN delegate to Cabinet Stockholm’, 15/9/1961, UD HP48:Kongo; ‘Chiffer-Telegram 135’, 16/9/1961, UD HP48:Kongo; ‘Telegram from Swedish UN delegate to Cabinet Stockholm’, 18/9/1961, UD HP48:Kongo.

<sup>419</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 15/12/1961; *Aftonbladet*, 20/12/1961.



from capitalists, neo-colonialists and fascists, the paper argued. They were the ones responsible for the war and the misery. In fact, by backing Tshombe with guns, money and moral support, they were the ones violating human rights, *Aftonbladet* argued, referring to how the Baluba had come to suffer.

How has Tshombe and the men behind him treated their political opposition? Ask the 40,000 Baluba refugees that the Swedes have had to care for. They know of how their land was devastated, how their fathers, brothers, women and children were murdered, their villages burned and their fields laid to waste ... .

No, the drama in Katanga is not the UN's fight against a people ... . It is the white mining capitalism's and the old colonial powers' war against the UN and the Congolese people.<sup>420</sup>

The UN's cause in the Congo was therefore, according to *Aftonbladet*, righteous and true to its intentions of helping the Congolese people. Sweden as a nation should be proud of the Swedish government's consistency in supporting the UN effort.

As had been the case with the Baluba in the Swedish press in 1960, the native soldiers of the gendarmerie were generally presented as misguided and naive poor men. Their motives for attacking the Swedes could not be explained other than by claiming that they were totally in the hands of ruthless Western mercenaries. The gendarmerie was therefore usually described in the Swedish media as 'the gendarmerie led by white officers'. In accordance with this line of argument, even Tshombe and his government were depicted as mere pawns in a scheme orchestrated by capitalists and mercenaries. This was in a way necessary in order to continue to explain how the Swedish soldiers could work in the best interests of the Congolese people while killing some of them on the battlefield.

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<sup>420</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 20/12/1961.

In December a division in the views of the Swedish left-wing and right-wing press could be detected. While, for instance, *Dagens Nyheter* agreed with *Aftonbladet* that the main problem in Katanga in December 1961 was the foreign mercenaries' activities there, it disagreed that this was the only problem. The fundamental political problems and the animosity were the responsibility of the Congolese leaders, the paper argued. The UN goal was therefore to 'pacify' the gendarmerie in order to get Tshombe back to negotiating a settlement with the government in Leopoldville. To deport the mercenaries from Katanga would forward that goal, even if not solving all the Congo problems.<sup>421</sup> The Swedish press was nevertheless united in its call for Swedish loyalty towards the UN in its time of hardship in the Congo and also horrified over the mercenaries, who were described as a completely different enemy than the Baluba had been back in 1960. Unlike the Baluba or the native soldiers of the gendarmerie, the mercenaries were portrayed as being well aware of what they were doing, which made the attacks on UN soldiers so much worse. Not only were they in the service of Belgian neo-colonial interests and at war with the UN, they had also voluntarily chosen to be mercenaries and travelled thousands of miles to create chaos in Africa. While this made them evil and ruthless, they were still accorded the traits of reason and purposefulness; traits not ascribed to the native soldiers of the gendarmerie, who were generally portrayed as manipulated or misguided. Significantly, this anti-colonialist rhetoric in some places also led to a dismissal of the internal Congolese problems as non-existent. In fact, as an article in *Aftonbladet* argued, all the fighting could end in an instant if Belgium, France and Great Britain threatened to withdraw the citizenships of the mercenaries and thereby make them leave Katanga.<sup>422</sup> The Congo itself in this context seemed to become more or less downgraded to simply the site for a Western power struggle or battle of ideology. In the media debate the description of the enemy ranged from being the 'UN on a communist intervention', as suggested by large parts of the Belgian and British press, to the 'mercenary neo-colonialist capitalists', as suggested by the Swedish left-wing media. Between the extreme positions and accusations, more moderate positions could be found, as for instance in

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<sup>421</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, 9/12/1961.

<sup>422</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 20/12/1961.

*Dagens Nyheter*, but their reports were most of the time no less centred on international politics. Instead, the role that the Congo was assigned from the autumn of 1961 was that of the victim. Whether the enemy was portrayed as being the Belgian mercenaries or the UN troops, they were described as the enemy of a less defined but surely suffering 'Congolese people'.

*The refugee camp, the Baluba troublemakers and victims*

As representing the opposition to Tshombe's rule in Katanga, the Baluba tribes became victims of harassment and persecution, mainly in Elizabethville but also throughout the rest of Katanga. The oppression of the Baluba steadily increased from the late summer of 1961. In the late days of August a few Baluba started to erect shelters outside the Swedish camp in order to receive protection from harassment by the Katangan police. Soon thereafter, large numbers of often severely beaten men, women and children sought protection in the proximity of the Swedish camp in the outskirts of Elizabethville. In just the two following weeks in early September, the size of the refugee camp steadily increased and by mid-September held some 30,000 people. The different Baluba tribes dominated the huge camp. Not only did the camp quickly become a massive responsibility for the battalion to handle, demanding long workdays and sophisticated logistics in order to be able to deliver food and water to what had become a small city, it also became an arena for a complex meeting between the victims of the Katangan civil conflict and those who were sent to protect them. In a single term the camp could be described as a problem. In fact, though, there were many different problems.

It was a military problem in the sense that Swedish soldiers sometimes had to work 70 or 80 hours a week, which of course both exhausted them and made them unavailable for patrolling the streets of Elizabethville. It also demanded the use of the battalion's resources in the form of medical personnel, interpreters and logistics personnel. Wærn called it 'slave work' and more than once reported the difficulties to his civilian UN superiors, demanding reinforcements.<sup>423</sup> The battalion had not been trained or

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<sup>423</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 5, XIIC, 31/10/1961, p. 7.

equipped to carry out this kind of work, nor was it in the longer run sufficiently manned to be able to sustain the work along with other duties.

The refugees themselves also constituted a problem for the battalion. The camp was thought of as unnecessarily large, containing people who did not actually need to be there. Many of the refugees were thought of as idlers, just living in the camp to obtain free food or avoid going to work. Some were seen as criminal profiteers who saw an opportunity to enrich themselves by maintaining a food black market in the camp. Still others were believed to crowd the camp for no other reason than that their clan leader had told them to. *Djungeltelegrafen* wrote:

Some among the thousand-headed crowd in the refugee camp have apparently been drawn there by masspsychosis. ... One can not, then, get away from the fact that a great many most likely have left their homes ... for more 'comfortable' reasons – to for free and without work more or less be provided for by the UN and to get away from unpaid bills and the like...<sup>424</sup>

'However', the paper continued:

... many, many have sought UN protection based on more serious reasons. They feel that an uncomfortable, primitive and crowded existence in the proximity of the Swedish camp ... is the only thinkable place [to be]. Life in their old houses at the moment offers nothing but uncertainty, insecurity and...mortal danger.<sup>425</sup>

A reappearing problem consisted of members of the Baluba jeunesse, the 'bewildered youths' who had attacked the train escorts of the 10th Battalion a year earlier. The jeunesse in the camp were widely disliked by the Swedes

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<sup>424</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11–12, XIIC, 20/10/1961, p. 13. See also Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), p. 98.

<sup>425</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11–12, XIIC, 20/10/1961, p. 13.

and seen as a source of violence there. According to many, they formed a mafia-like organization in the camp, offering 'protection', stealing and selling food, and at least for periods of time sustaining a reign of terror.<sup>426</sup> The jeunesse also, especially as a consequence of the gendarmerie's firing on the camp during the September fighting, tried to storm the city and get even with their enemies. Even though this admittedly was a logical response by the helpless jeunesse, the UN could not let it happen. It would have brought even more violence to the streets of Elizabethville. On a number of occasions the jeunesse and the Swedish soldiers clashed when the former were being disarmed and pushed back into the camp. Some of the confrontations also ended with Baluba casualties as well as wounded Swedish soldiers.

One of the Swedish soldiers who had responsibilities in the refugee camp was Lieutenant Stig von Bayer. In his memoir he bears witness to the violence inside and outside the camp, and the frustrating work trying to keep the situation under control. For him the whole idea of allowing a refugee camp at all was a problem, and the core of that problem was the jeunesse. Just to distribute food, twice a week, demanded barbed wire, dogs and soldiers with fixed bayonets to protect the distributors and the less violent refugees from the jeunesse.<sup>427</sup>

But the refugees also lived under constant outside threat. During the fighting in September and again in December, mercenary snipers fired randomly into the refugee camp, killing defenceless civilians. 'Some 20 innocent victims a day was not unusual in the refugee camp. Among them were also women and small children', Wærn noted in his report.<sup>428</sup> Many of the military actions taken in the December War had therefore explicitly been for the protection of the civilians in the camp.

Consequently, the Swedish image of the Baluba expanded from being the wild and misguided freedom fighters they had been in 1960 towards one which included a view of them as more or less helpless victims of the oppressive regime in Katanga. This can to a large extent be explained by the fact that the suffering among the Baluba women and children became

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<sup>426</sup> Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), pp. 108–112; Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 237–242.

<sup>427</sup> Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), p. 109.

<sup>428</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIK, 30/9/1961, p. 14.

particularly visible in the camp. It helped widen the image of the Baluba beyond the earlier predominant image of them as either the clan chief or troublesome jenuesse. Wærn reacted strongly to the Katangan government's abuse, even drawing a parallel with the Nazi regime during the Second World War.

The procedure by which the injustice was done strongly reminded [me] of the Gestapo's methods during the persecution of the Jews during the Second Word War. ... It was obvious that in Katanga there occurred the worst kind of persecution protected by the Belgian-directed gendarmerie, the security service and the police.<sup>429</sup>

Eventually the camp had grown to contain somewhere between 30,000–50,000 people, which created a heavy workload for the Swedish battalion to handle. While the work in the camp was both physically and mentally trying, sometimes forcing the soldiers to work 70 hours a week, it also became a source of pride for the battalion. As seen above, the political and media climate was dominated by the question of whether the UN's *offensive* military action in September and December was necessary or even legal. The fact that snipers, and even mortar crews, targeted the camp made much of the battalion's military action here in a sense *defensive*. To actually fight for the protection of defenceless civilians at that particular moment could hence be added to the motives of UN policy in general and the defence of the battalion itself. If nothing else: not to fight could mean a potential massacre of civilians. Congo veteran Jan Åkerman still has clear memories of the misery in the camp. For him, and many others, the camp offered the possibility to participate in actually doing something for someone first hand.<sup>430</sup> In a *Djungeltelegrafen* article published during the 18th Battalion's stay at Kamina, veterans of the Swedish mortar platoon were interviewed. Many of them had served in the 12th and 14th Battalions during the fighting. The article tried to reconstruct the events of December 1961:

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<sup>429</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 3, XIK, 31/8/1961, p. 3. 'Belgian-directed' here refers to many of the mercenaries and military experts working for Tshombe being Belgians, not to Belgium.

<sup>430</sup> Conversation with Jan Åkerman, 22/1/2009. See also Erik Lindholm (2005), p. 120.

The boys in the [14th Battalion's] mortar platoon are tense. For every grenade that is dropped into the black tube ... the lines in their pale faces become more relaxed. And for every detonation that is heard, the boys comment with satisfaction: – That is for the bleeding children we saw just a minute ago, that is for the woman with mutilated arms raised to the skies crying out, wondering where her family and house were...<sup>431</sup>

In short, to protect and help civilian refugees could not, by anyone, be considered as anything but a noble deed. Even though the duties demanded much of the individual soldiers and, at times, also required them to prevent uprisings there, the camp nevertheless became something to actually defend. In the rhetoric of the battalion, those helpless victims in the camp had the Swedes to thank for their lives.

Furthermore, the day-to-day management of the camp was also a source of pride. In fact, Wærn argued, no one but the Swedes were able to do the work. The Irish battalion, which initially was supposed to be responsible for half the camp, was simply not professional enough. Wærn wrote that they lacked the ability to organize and handle the situation. To be assisted by any of the Indian battalions in Elizabethville was not an option, since 'the Indians are both less liked here and too trigger-nervous and thereby less suitable to work with the refugees.'<sup>432</sup> There was, however, frustration about a task too well done, as the situation risked becoming permanent, thereby wearing down the abilities, resources and morale of the battalion. In the January report he wrote:

The Swedish battalion's dedicated work with the refugees has apparently led the UN administration to in effect ignore the

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<sup>431</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XVIII, 26/10/1962, p. 3.

<sup>432</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 5, XI, 31/10/1961, pp. 6–7.

problem. 'The Swedes will handle the refugees' has been the common phrase.<sup>433</sup>

The Swedish consul in Leopoldville, Bengt Rösiö, confirmed Wærn's description in a telegram to the Department of Foreign Affairs, adding that among leading UN representatives there seemed to be a general attitude that if Wærn and his battalion were to be transferred from Elizabethville it would be a problem, 'since the Swedes enjoy the greatest confidence and it is regarded unlikely [that] Tunisians or others can deal with the Baluba.'<sup>434</sup> On the other hand, Rösiö added, Wærn was still considered as having good reasons to request such a transfer.

In the news press back in Sweden, the refugees were variously characterized as the fighting went on. As exemplified above by *Aftonbladet*, the suffering of the Congolese people could most obviously be connected to the 30,000–40,000 Baluba who crowded the refugee camp. In such descriptions the Swedish soldiers appeared as dutiful volunteers who from a sense of responsibility for the greater good had to take care of the misery created by the Katangan regime and its mercenaries.<sup>435</sup> Wærn suggested in his book that the UN, in fact, once the refugee camp had been established, realized that such political points could be made and therefore did not press for a fast solution to the refugee problem.<sup>436</sup> Nevertheless, it was mainly the frictions with the jeunusse that became headline news in Sweden. From this point of view, the Baluba once again became generalized as an uncontrolled mass of 40,000 people wanting nothing else than to storm and bring mayhem to the streets of Elizabethville in search of food and revenge.<sup>437</sup> The only reason they in any larger accumulations did not was the effort made by the Swedes to stop them. For example, *Aftonbladet* published a picture (see Image 8) in December with the accompanying text:

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<sup>433</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 2, XIVK, 31/1/1962, p. 3.

<sup>434</sup> 'Telegram from Rösiö to the Department of Foreign Affairs', 8/1/1962, UD, HP48:Kongo.

<sup>435</sup> See also, for instance, *Dagens Nyheter*, 13/12/1961.

<sup>436</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 244. This irritated Wærn, who considered it inhumane.

<sup>437</sup> See, for instance, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22/9/1961 and 23/9/1961.



In the picture a lone Swede against Balubas [sic]. The hateful mood in the Baluba camp is now at boiling point and the few Swedish UN soldiers, one [of whom can] here be seen scuffling with a bunch of Balubas, can only with the utmost difficulty control the situation. It is now feared that the revengeful refugees, who have armed themselves with axes, spears, long jungle knives and bicycle chains, will break out of the camp. Should they succeed the real bloodbath awaits. In the camp are around 40,000 Balubas and they are guarded by only 67 Swedish UN soldiers.<sup>438</sup>



Image 9. The text reads: 'In the picture a lone Swede against Balubas'  
*Aftonbladet*, 6/12/1961.

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<sup>438</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 6/12/1961. The plural form of a Baluba is Baluba and not 'Balubas'.

Not only can, what appears to be, the arm of another soldier be seen on the right-hand side of the picture, but it is also apparent that the refugees are waving nothing but empty plates and cans. While it was true that hundreds of jeunesse did go, or tried to go, armed into Elizabethville, *Aftonbladet* nevertheless produced a gross exaggeration and generalization, not only of the refugees as in the main aggressive and hate-filled, but also of the Swedes' supposed ability to stop 40,000 Baluba as they tried to break out of the camp. The violence between jeunesse and Swedes in some places also raised questions of whether recent events in the Congo had eroded the moral standard of the soldiers and the mission itself. *Bohuslänningen*, quoted in *Dagens Nyheter*, commented:

[T]he suggestion that ... the attitudes vis-à-vis the native inhabitants have become more hardened, could be a symptom of the foundation for the peace mission being corroded under the pressure from the events. It is of importance that our efforts are supported by high moral standards and of a home opinion convinced of the rightness of the cause.<sup>439</sup>

Clear as it might be, this point seems to have been lost in general, and as this study comes to its conclusion it will be profitable to comment further on this quote.

As described in an earlier chapter, the interaction with the Baluba was complex and the refugee camp in 1961 created an arena for this which only added further to the complexity. First and foremost, the camp effectively established and confirmed the hierarchal power relationship between the Swedish soldiers and the Baluba. In fact, some 40,000 people's lives depended on a few hundred Swedish soldiers' ability to deliver enough food, water, medicine, and provide sufficient security. The Swedes established rules, as well as guard posts and boundaries. They levelled shelters not erected in correct places, they intercepted and disarmed troublemakers; in short, their mission was to be the law and the provider. For some of the

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<sup>439</sup> Quotation from *Bohuslänningen*, in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2/12/1961.

camp inhabitants, most notably the jeunesse, who at times were forcibly kept inside the perimeter, it also became in a sense a prison. In order to keep the criminal elements at bay, especially when delivering food, the guards used dogs, bayonets and barbed wire. Large-scale attempts to break out or attack Swedish personnel were quickly punished: first by verbal warnings, followed by warning shots and, as a last resort, by opening fire on those involved.<sup>440</sup>

It is tempting to view the meeting in the refugee camp as a classic ‘colonial encounter’, whereby the sophisticated and morally superior white guardian, using both the carrot and the stick, takes care of the childlike natives. In a way this is certainly true, perhaps especially so based on the writings of the Swedish newspapers quoted above. Likewise, it is not hard to find evidence for a wide variety of attitudes towards the refugees among the soldiers themselves. Some took the humanitarian mission very seriously, helping the refugees even when off-duty, while many others referred to and treated the inhabitants of the camp in very condescending ways.<sup>441</sup> The long exposure to the misery in the camp, in combination with – and partly because of – the jeunesse’s provocations within and outside it, started to erode the morale of the Swedish battalion.<sup>442</sup> This was confirmed by Wærn, who noted in a monthly summarizing report that ‘the frequency of disciplinary cases has, during November, been greater than before.’<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> The most significant episodes of violent clashes between the Swedish soldiers and the jeunesse were two events on 5 October and 18 October 1961. On 5 October a group visiting the camp were attacked by jeunesse, resulting in several killed Baluba and one seriously wounded Swedish soldier. On 18 October a Swedish patrol became involved in a shooting incident just outside the camp, killing several Baluba jeunesse. See ‘Report regarding assault on Sgt. Martinsson, Sw Bn Oct 5, 1961’, in FN-BAT XII, Sekt. 3Ö, Vol. F:38; Kongorapport, nr. 5, XIIC, 31/10/1961, pp.4–6. See also Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 203–209, 255–261; Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 247–253; Inge Kamstedt, (ed.) (1982), pp. 157–161; Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008) pp. 109–112.

<sup>441</sup> Conversation with Lars Frost, 20/1/2009; Erik Lindholm (2005), pp. 85–87; Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), 106–112; Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 201–221; Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 237–235.

<sup>442</sup> See Löfgren’s interview with Lindholm, in Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), p. 214; Erik Lindholm (2005), p. 145.

<sup>443</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 6, XIIC, 30/11/1961, p. 26. Wærn, however, thought this might be normal for any battalion at the end of its tour of duty.

Claes Löfgren makes a further point regarding how and which situations led to disciplinary consequences, wondering why no disciplinary measures were initiated, or the situations at least investigated, when Swedish soldiers opened fire on refugees. As a sharp contrast, he notes the battalion's extensive interrogations and investigations into drunkenness on duty, or the disciplinary action taken against a Swedish sergeant who played his accordion at a late hour and disrespected an officer.<sup>444</sup>

What was the reason for why the Swedes investigated the Sergeant's offensive behaviour with routine accuracy, but did not write the slightest little record when Swedish soldiers shot refugees dead?<sup>445</sup>

It is hard not to suspect, Löfgren concludes, 'that refugees and Swedes were measured with different sets of ethical yardsticks.'<sup>446</sup> As far as can be judged, Löfgren is correct. However, there are some points to be made here that separate the collective of the battalion from a collective of, say, missionaries or colonial administrators. First, it was a situation that no one wanted. Naturally, it is safe to assume that no one wants to live in a refugee camp unless the alternative is even worse. Neither had the UN welcomed or taken any initiatives to establish the camp. Actual violence and harassment, or fear thereof, had driven the refugees to the proximity of the Swedish camp, while the battalion had responded from a need for sanitary and military control of the situation. In other words, the decision to formally accept the responsibility of caring for the refugees was made by the UN after a provisional camp already existed. The refugee situation had, according to the UN, quickly become a 'serious problem for the United Nations which had to protect, feed, shelter and care for them ...'.<sup>447</sup> The initial reason the

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<sup>444</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 219–220.

<sup>445</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), p. 220. The correct Swedish military rank 'Rustmästare' has here been translated to the nearest English equivalent 'Sergeant'.

<sup>446</sup> Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), p. 220.

<sup>447</sup> S/4940, 'Report of the Officer-in-charge of the United Nations Operations in the Congo to the Secretary General relating to the implementation of paragraph A-2 of the Security Council Resolution of 21 February 1961', 14/9/1961.

Swedes had to do the job was simply that it was at their camp the refugees had gathered. Unlike in a classic 'colonial encounter' or 'missionary effort', there existed no plan or idea of, for example, disciplining or educating the refugees. Neither was the encounter thought of as a lasting project. In fact, for the battalion, there was no 'project' at all other than to the best of its ability uphold order and provide for basic needs. The refugees would stay as long as their alternatives were worse than living in the camp, and the Swedes would provide for them as long as the refugees were there or until some other unit could relieve them.

The lack of a long-term goal other than to be relieved of the burden of the camp, and in combination with the strong belief that managing a refugee camp with 40,000 people, after all, lay well outside what were considered the 'real' duties of the battalion, in effect made it impossible from the battalion's point of view, as a collective, to fail. Here lies a complementary answer to Löfgren's question above. The efforts and actions by the Swedes in the camp, whether the barbed wire, dogs, bayonets or even the shooting and killing of refugees, could be described as necessary in order to avoid far worse scenarios.<sup>448</sup> Hence, in cases of violent confrontations between the refugees (more often than not the jeunesse) and the Swedes, the burden of guilt was always, and by necessity, firmly placed on the Baluba. It was understood that no Swedish soldier would ever have fired at any refugee unless he had been ordered to and had found himself in a situation in which all other options had been exhausted. He could therefore never be officially blamed or charged with an offence by the battalion. The accordion-playing sergeant, however, used in Löfgren's example, had clearly violated existing rules and military norms valid everywhere and any time within the Swedish army. Further, Löfgren's claim that there were no records or other official accounts of the shooting incidents is not completely accurate. The shooting incidents were documented, however not in the shape of internal criminal investigations.<sup>449</sup> This is a distinct military theme. A soldier who discharges

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<sup>448</sup> See Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 240, 247–249; Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), pp. 104–112.

<sup>449</sup> See 'Report regarding assault on Sgt Martinsson, Sw Bn Oct 5, 1961', KrA, FN-BAT XII, Sekt. 3Ö, Vol. F38. The report is undated, but probably written soon after the incident.

his weapon in a stressful situation is supposed to have a reason or an order (preferably both) to do so. Even if for some reason his shots are wide of the target, killing or wounding innocent bystanders or even fellow soldiers, he is rarely officially punished or prosecuted. If anything, he would be considered a victim himself. If any blame at all were to be directed inwards, it would hit the battalion and its officers for placing the soldiers in the particular situation, or possibly the army for sending unprepared soldiers in the first place. Stig von Bayer relates one such incident when a Swedish soldier during disorder in the camp accidentally shot an innocent woman dead. When a senior officer suggested that the soldier should be placed before a court martial, Lieutenant von Bayer replied:

No ... I don't think we can blame the soldier. It was an accident. And even if it weren't, then it's our fault. ... These men were threatened by ... certain death and we have not given them any instructions on how they shall defend themselves. So if anyone unluckily gets killed, well...<sup>450</sup>

Faced with this argument, according to von Bayer, the senior officer let the matter go, and now instead concerned himself with how he would be able to explain what had happened in terms that the civilian sections of the ONUC administration would understand.<sup>451</sup>

To sum up the multifaceted meeting between the refugees and the Swedish soldiers, I would certainly agree with Löfgren that the refugees and the Swedes were generally 'measured with different sets of ethical yardsticks'. However, unless we take some time to decipher the ingredients of the 'ethical yardstick' itself, and relate these to the perception of Swedish society and military culture suggested in Chapter 2, we will indeed end up with the assumption that it all boils down to naïve and blunt racism. While this was certainly the case for many individuals, it did not apply to others and is therefore, more importantly, for this study, insufficient as an explanation for

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<sup>450</sup> Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), p. 108.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

the battalion as a collective. The special circumstances of the camp itself must be added, and the factual events accounted for. All sources, from von Bayer in the field, through to the battalion commander, Wærn, to the head of the civilian section of the ONUC, O'Brien, speak of the *jeunesse* as being a main cause of trouble in the camp.<sup>452</sup> As had been the case during the 10th Battalion's confrontations with the *jeunesse*, the young Baluba warriors were portrayed as misguided, drug-using, erratic and very dangerous. In the given situation their actions were considered irrational. Not only were they dangerous for the Swedes, but for the other refugees and the UN mission of peace and order in the city as well. Even though constantly present, they were a minority, or as Wærn commented in his book: 'a majority of the 45,000 inhabitants were decent people, who never caused us any problems.'<sup>453</sup> From the sources, two different but parallel images of the refugees clearly emerge: the good and the bad. However, as is often the case, violent confrontations are the easiest to notice, as was clear in the case of descriptions in the Swedish media. Also, for the battalion the violence and confrontations naturally became the most dramatic episodes in regard to the management of the camp. Furthermore, in the *jeunesse* the Swedish battalion had rediscovered a threat to the well-being of the primary group, and it was unlikely that any of them would be treated with anything but suspicion. The strict hierarchy between the soldiers and the refugees was embedded in the camp management itself. Without strict control it was believed that the camp would experience a total breakdown, descending into widespread riots and violence. The fact that the battalion managed to avoid such a breakdown, despite its outspoken admittance of not being properly manned, equipped or trained for such a mission, was from a battalion perspective a source of pride. Any admittance of collective failure for the battalion was of course unthinkable, especially so during the times of war in Elizabethville.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 237–238; Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), pp. 109–112; Conor Cruise O'Brien (1962), pp. 294–295.

<sup>453</sup> Jonas Wærn (1980), p. 243.

<sup>454</sup> The many coexisting stories of the meeting between the Baluba refugees and the Swedish soldiers from August 1961 to April 1962 are extremely varied: from the misuse of power, based on fear, racial prejudice and brutalization within the Swedish battalion,

### *Casualties of war and peace*

The highest price of war is death. There is no decisive source to rely on for estimating the number of deaths in the Congo conflict. The conflict did not in fact end with the UN's exit in 1964 but has continued in different forms until the present. For the Katangan conflict of 1960–1963 it is, however, safe to argue that the civilian deaths could be counted in the thousands and for the gendarmerie at least in the hundreds. The UN lost 250 of its personnel during the ONUC, of which an overwhelming majority were soldiers. The Swedish contingent lost 19 of its military personnel, five of them losing their lives during the fightings in the autumn and winter of 1961.<sup>455</sup>

In Sweden, newspapers published the names, ages and photographs of all Swedish soldiers killed during the Congo conflict. Usually, wounded soldiers were given the same space and attention. Ceremonies led by the commander and the priest were held at the battalion's headquarters before the bodies were transported home. Most papers reported on the first arrival of fallen Swedish soldiers in September 1961. *Aftonbladet* was among many newspapers that covered the arrival, and included a large picture showing a small number of grieving relatives standing in front of coffins draped with Swedish flags. The headline 'You gave your life for peace and reconciliation' was taken directly from the speech held by the priest. A military guard of honour attended the ceremony and a funeral march was played. Attending

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to the admirable humanitarian work done by an understaffed and unprepared battalion, in the context of war and based on humanitarian necessity and a sense of duty. Needless to say, both stories and all those in between, are true. It is not the purpose of this study to blame or celebrate any particular event or person in the camp, but rather try to explain how actors at different nodes of analysis reacted to or used the management of the camp in their contemporaneous motive construction for the Swedish participation in the Congo. For a variety of descriptions of the camp and the relationship between the Swedish soldiers and the refugees, see Jonas Wærn (1980), pp. 237–255; Erik Lindolm (2005), p. 85–145; Robert Andersson (2005), pp. 45–54; Christian Braunstein (ed.) (2008), pp. 104–116; Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 201–221, 245–261; Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 119–122, and Conor Cruise O'Brien (1962), pp. 294–299.

<sup>455</sup> *The Blue Helmets* (1996), p. 709; Nils Sköld (1994), p. 264.



were also representatives of the government and of the monarchy.<sup>456</sup> This way of honouring the fallen soldiers, with national symbolism, is strikingly similar to the funeral rituals for fallen Swedish soldiers still used today.

Any loss of Swedish lives due to combat in the Congo was naturally met with grief and worries among all parts of Swedish society. However, generally the deaths were seldom discussed or debated by the government, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the army, the media or even by *Djungeltelegrafen*, other than, as far as possible, to objectively try to establish what had happened. As the first soldier died in September 1961, it became apparent that a few casualties alone would not change the rhetoric of the media, the government or the battalion. Undén made a short entry in his diary about a conversation between himself, Erlander and King Gustav VI Adolf:

We spoke of the change for the worse in the Congo. The King treats it calmly. A few losses are unavoidable, was his opinion.<sup>457</sup>

In other words, the fallen soldiers were never made individual heroes for rhetorical use; neither were their deaths in any larger way described as pointless or in vain by the detractors of the ONUC in Sweden.

On the political level the reports of Swedish soldiers fallen in battle were, of course, troublesome. Erlander clearly felt the burden of responsibility, referring to the soldiers as 'our boys' in his diary.<sup>458</sup> On a more pragmatic level, it is reasonable to assume that the government had worries about what number of casualties it would take to break the general consensus about the Swedish role in the ONUC and thereby lose support from the political opposition, public opinion, the media, the army or the battalions themselves.

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<sup>456</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 23/9/1961.

<sup>457</sup> Karl Molin (ed.) (2002), p. 650.

<sup>458</sup> Sven Erlander (ed.) (2011), p. 142.

Arguably, the deaths of soldiers worked both ways in relation to the cultural foundations of the mission. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Philip Smith argued that any given war needs a 'cultural mandate' to be sustainable. The cultural mandate can, figuratively speaking, be seen as the 'glue' that holds the three analytic nodes together to keep the mission 'in order'. Hence, the weaker it is, the easier it breaks. Every killed soldier adds to the challenge to the cultural foundation as the question of relativity, 'Is it worth it?', becomes more pressing. Put differently, every such death needs to be justified by the cultural foundation at the different nodes of analysis. Otherwise it will stir opposition. However, on the other hand much of the criticism of the ONUC, in the foreign press and by the Katanga Lobby in Sweden, had taken its point of departure in blaming the UN for unnecessary violence, and as being militarily superior and thereby unjust in its 'crushing' of the Katangan government. Every killed or wounded Swedish soldier could hence be treated as a sort of 'evidence' showing that this was not true. By pointing to the tragedy in the Congo as a tragedy also for Sweden, the burden of duty could be given a new level of significant meaning. Placed within the cultural foundation, the fallen and wounded soldiers could thereby be treated as symbols for the dedicated way Sweden as a nation fulfilled its duty towards the UN, its high ideals of altruism and its loyalty towards the developing world. In parliament, Undén made use of this argument.

For Sweden the mission in the Congo is a *sacrifice* ... in the interest of the UN and the peace.<sup>459</sup>

In connection with the first casualties in 1961, Undén also went beyond the rhetoric of the noble cause of peace. In order to sufficiently justify and explain the deaths of Swedish soldiers in the Congo, he explicitly identified the mercenaries as the enemies of the Swedish soldiers, condemning them for starting a 'futile and bloody war'. This was one of the rare occasions on

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<sup>459</sup> 'Inlägg av utrikesminister Undén i remissdebatten i andra kammaren den 23 januari', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1962* (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesministeriet, 1963), p. 94. Emphasis added.

which Undén spoke of war in the Congo. In doing so, he acknowledged that the soldiers there had in fact fallen as a consequence of war. He also identified the Congolese people as the victims, while at the same time assuring his listeners that the outcome of the war would be victory for the UN and thereby the Swedish soldiers. This was in a way an example of classic war rhetoric.<sup>460</sup>

The case of the fallen peacekeeper also accentuates a wide range of problematic matters. Most conspicuous is perhaps the ceremony itself. To drape a coffin with the national flag symbolizes that the nation itself mourns the lives of the fallen. Arguably, there are in fact no worthy alternatives to the highly patriotic ceremonies surrounding the fallen soldier. There are no sufficient international ceremonies, and one way or another the bodies of the fallen soldiers need to come *home*, which of course means home to his or her nation. The soldiers' return demanded a worthy reception by the nation and hence the nation needed to be represented. Furthermore, national mourning and respect are absolutely necessary for the credibility of any political argument regarding the mission as part of a national sacrifice. This is such a strong ingredient of the civil–military relationship that it is often taken for granted and seen as natural.

George L. Mosse traces what he calls the *Cult of the Fallen Soldier* back to the early years of the nineteenth century and the rise of citizen armies. European wars previously fought by kings with the aid of mercenaries were gradually superseded by wars fought by nations with the aid of their citizens, from the Napoleonic era onwards.<sup>461</sup> This transformation meant that the 'interests' and 'will' of the nation became the patriotic duty of the citizens, and to die defending the nation in war was by many believed to be the ultimate sacrifice in fulfilling that duty. Mosse further notes that the cult of the fallen soldier was at its highest point in Europe during the First World War, as hundreds of thousands of young men rallied round the flag to do their patriotic duty for the motherland. As the men fought and died in the

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<sup>460</sup> 'Pressmeddelande den 19 September', in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m. m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1961*, (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesministeriet, 1962), pp. 58–59.

<sup>461</sup> George L. Mosse (1990), pp. 9–10.

two Great Wars, the nations repaid their effort by honouring them with medals, ceremonies, monuments, music, literature, memorial days and separate graveyards.<sup>462</sup> The realization of the horrors of modern war following the end of the Second World War and the apocalyptic potential of nuclear weapons eventually started to erode the glory of death in war, according to Mosse.<sup>463</sup> One has certainly reason to suspect that the level of patriotic enthusiasm in 1914 will not return again within Europe, but the bond between the nation and the military is nevertheless still strong. Resic shows that even the fallen American soldiers of the disliked and lost Vietnam War have, from the 1980s and onward, become honoured in terms of their patriotic sacrifice. That the common soldier is not to blame, and should therefore be honoured accordingly, at least by subsequent generations, has become a general standpoint.<sup>464</sup>

The Swedish military had, of course, no direct combat experience from either of the two World Wars, but the point here is that it is within this context the Western military institution is modelled. Huntington and Blocq both note that the soldier and the military institution are 'imbued with the ideal of service to the nation'.<sup>465</sup> In return, the soldiers of that military expect to be honoured, not only by relatives or certain groups in society, but by the nation as a whole, and especially so in times of war. Complications then arise, as the fallen soldier is actually also a peacekeeper, and the cult of the fallen soldier does not as easily evolve into a cult of the fallen peacekeeper. As previously shown, for the battalion and the army to adhere to the soldier role perception and acknowledge a state of war in Katanga was not a problem. This meant that for the battalions the expectancy of public and political support for Swedish soldiers at war grew with the intensity of the combat events, culminating with fallen Swedish soldiers. As some of the soldiers of the battalion fulfilled the 'final paragraph' of the civil-military 'contract' by dying in battle, the nation could do nothing but fall back on traditional patterns of honouring its fallen nationals. Nevertheless, it struck a discordant note in relation to the previous arguments of non-interference or

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<sup>462</sup> See George L. Mosse (1990), Chapter 5, pp. 70–106.

<sup>463</sup> George L. Mosse (1990), pp. 223–225.

<sup>464</sup> Sanimir Resic (1999), pp. 254–255.

<sup>465</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1985), p. 35. See also Daniel Blocq (2010), p. 297.

non-use of war terminology. Neither did the way the government had distanced itself, by repeatedly stressing that the battalions consisted of voluntary soldiers who were on an international mission under international military command, fit the traditional civil–military relationship. The fallen peacekeeper could hence not completely be connected to the cult of the fallen soldier, as the national war effort still coexisted with the international peace effort. To some degree, the death of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld came to ease this tension.

As mentioned above, on his way to Ndola to meet with Tshombe in order to try to stop the fighting in September 1961, his plane crashed, killing everyone on board. The news of Hammarskjöld's death came as a shock to the Swedish public. Tage Erlander noted in his diary:

The Hammarskjöld catastrophe has turned most things upside down. What will happen now in a world that so much needed his clear and cool intellect?<sup>466</sup>

While the fallen soldiers were not used rhetorically to argue in any particular direction, Hammarskjöld certainly was. At first the tragedy seemed to have in an instant brought the world closer to an end. The Secretary General had symbolized all that was good in the world, someone who had had the ability to give people a sense of fragile security in an otherwise insecure world. A letter from 'an ordinary housewife' to the magazine *Vi* was later published in *Aftonbladet*, as representative of how most of her compatriots felt:

– A message so horribly cruel. Dag Hammarskjöld dead. The man who was an element of security. A hope for peace in the world. ... Like in a flash I see. Never-ending grey columns of refugees. Emaciated old people with swollen bellies. Mothers with dead children in their arms.

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<sup>466</sup> Sven Erlander (ed.) (2011), p. 143.

- I hear the scream of the wounded and the rattle of the machine gun. Roaring fighter jets and the thunder of house walls crumbling down.
- This must be hell!<sup>467</sup>

At the same time, the Swedish media competed in honouring the Secretary General and his accomplishments in the UN.<sup>468</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet* wrote:

All the free and peace-loving peoples of the world, already living in agony from the toughest crisis since the end of the Second World War, have been struck by the mournful news whose significance and effects are still hard to grasp.<sup>469</sup>

Hammar skjöld was seen as an unselfish hero of the world. In fact, *Svenska Dagbladet* continued, 'he would voluntarily and gladly have sacrificed his life, if he was sure it had served the cause of the UN and peoples' reconciliation.'<sup>470</sup> The death and honouring of Hammar skjöld as 'fallen at his post' on his 'mission of peace' rubbed off on the Swedish Congo soldiers. The many military references to the 'fallen commander', and suggestions that he had been shot down by enemies of the UN, in a sense made all the Swedish UN soldiers part of his cause; a cause obviously worth sacrificing oneself for. The fact that the bodies of the Swedish members of the crew and passengers of the downed plane, including members of the Swedish military, arrived simultaneously in Sweden only added to this notion.

The death of Hammar skjöld could not, however, in the longer run dampen the growing international and domestic criticism of the Congo mission in early 1962. The immense status and respect for the fallen World War soldiers led Mosse to his thesis of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier. The fallen

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<sup>467</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 30/9/1961.

<sup>468</sup> See, for instance, 'Dagens Debatt' in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 21/9/1961.

<sup>469</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/9/1961.

<sup>470</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19/9/1961.

Swedish ONUC soldiers, although properly honoured at their funerals, would not be bestowed with anything approaching this status.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has dealt with what analytically was the 'second phase' of the Swedish military involvement in the Congo. The fighting in September and December 1961 differed substantially from the attacks on the train escorts the year before. As we shall see, it also differed from the next 'phase' of the Swedish efforts in the Congo.

Unlike earlier battalions, the 12th and 14th Battalions were drawn into extensive fighting in Elizabethville. The military engagements in September and December were on a significantly larger scale and included the use of heavy weaponry, led to many casualties on both sides, and quickly became headline news in large parts of the world. The conflict engendered political tension between UN members, as newspapers in mainly Belgium, Great Britain and France criticized the UN's reasons for taking action.

In Sweden the government reaffirmed its position from 1960, by both domestically and internationally stating that Swedish support for the ONUC would continue, as a withdrawal would be a blunt display of disloyalty towards the UN. A small but nevertheless loud public opposition in Sweden grew stronger in the wake of reports from the Congo. It also began receiving some support from the Swedish right-wing media. The political disagreements on the moral and legal justifications for the UN's actions elevated the reports from the Congo to become an ideological dispute about which was the right way to handle the Congo issue. As a consequence, the work of the Swedish battalions became viewed in this context. For the battalion it created a sense of being betrayed by the Swedish media. Swedish newspapers reported on the violence, describing a chaotic and collapsing situation and even reprinting parts of the Katangan propaganda. While the term 'war' became synonymous with UN failure in the media, it was contrastingly seen by the battalions as the controlled context in which the soldiers worked. For the battalion and its members, it was fully possible to act heroically and even win battles on the operational level. Victory in the field could not, however, be celebrated, as it was embedded in a larger political failure and ideological dispute. Neither the

UN nor the Swedish government could rhetorically acknowledge a 'state of war' since this, hence, would be the acknowledgement of failure.

Herein lies the most severe challenge to the Clausewitzian trinity when applied to peacekeeping. As the peacekeeping mission became confrontational and developed into war, the soldiers followed suit – from being peacekeeping soldiers to war-fighting soldiers. The duty was no longer to guard the peace but to win the war. The acknowledgement of war brought with it new sets of definitions of success and new parameters for what constituted work well done. Since neither the analytic node of the government nor the analytic node of the media could follow the battalions in the shift towards war, a 'disorder' in the trinity appeared. In 1961 the challenge to the trinity was not enough to disrupt the cultural foundation and thereby collapse the Swedish consensus about the ONUC, much due to the political unity in Sweden and the operational success in December, but it came to fuel public opposition in Sweden during the year to come.

Nor were the shifting roles from peacekeeper to warrior and back again easy to take on for the battalion as a collective. The combat threatened the primary group and by December a clear picture of the enemy existed; something that undeniably conflicted with the role of peacekeeper. When the 14th Battalion finally came to be transferred to Kamina in central Katanga in April 1962, this was met by a feeling of relief from all nodes within the trinity.





## 8. Bringing the secession to an end

### *A year of negotiations*

The military success in the 'December War' had again brought Tshombe to the negotiating table in late 1961. Through UN arrangements, Prime Minister Adoula of the central government met with Tshombe in Kitona to discuss the Katangan dilemma. By 21 December the parties had reached an agreement whereby Katanga be reunited with the Congolese Republic. Even though putting his name on the agreement, Tshombe had made clear to the UN that the accord had to be ratified by the Katangan Assembly in order to guarantee that the settlement would be honoured. The following lengthy debates in the Katangan Assembly resulted in an acceptance of the Kitona accord merely as a draft agreement. Therefore, Tshombe only viewed the agreement as a potential basis for further discussion.<sup>471</sup>

Hence, the larger part of 1962 was a time of further negotiations, with both sides producing and rejecting proposals on settlements. By August 1962 Acting Secretary General U Thant recognized that there was little political progress in the discussions and called for new and more robust measures. Backed by several leading UN members, most importantly the United States, he proposed a 'Plan of National Conciliation', which, according to Abi-Saab, was 'basically a federal constitution' that also included a plan for the Katangan gendarmerie's integration into the ANC. It furthermore included a general amnesty for Tshombe, his administration and the gendarmerie. A new element in the agreement was also added: a strict timetable. Katangan failure to comply with the timetable would, through a series of phases, raise the level of economic pressure on the Katangan regime

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<sup>471</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 172–173, 179.

and in the end result in the complete boycott and isolation of the province. By early September both parties had accepted the plan, albeit Tshombe had done so under protest.<sup>472</sup> The idea behind the plan, according to Abi-Saab, was that if the timetable was not followed this would allow the UN to use its troops to take control of federal property in Elizabethville, such as the Union Minière's facilities in the city. The plan would also allow the UN to protect the central government's personnel on arrival in Elizabethville, just as it would grant them the right to remove any roadblocks in the city. Such interference was by then believed to inevitably lead to one of two scenarios: either the Katangan complete acceptance of the reintegration, or a forceful reaction by the gendarmerie. The latter scenario would then give the UN in Elizabethville the right to use its full military resources, since every action from that point in time could be justified by the UN troops' right to self-defence.<sup>473</sup> This was also what transpired. On 24 December 1962 the gendarmerie opened fire on the UN troops stationed at the Union Minière's compounds in Elizabethville. While negotiations with Tshombe were again initiated, the UN wasted no time in using this opportunity. During the following days ONUC troops cleared all roadblocks in the city, while the Swedish fighter planes rendered the gendarmerie's airport in Kolwezi useless and in the process destroyed most Katangan aircraft on the ground. Irish troops occupied the town of Kipushi, the Swedish troops took Kaminaville, and in the first days of 1963 the Indian contingent occupied the stronghold in Jadotville. In general, the UN troops met little or no resistance. The gendarmerie had been routed and, after receiving a promise of amnesty, Tshombe resigned and by the end of January 1963 the Katangan secession had been ended by force.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid., pp. 180–182.

<sup>473</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), p. 185. The Swedish Chief of Staff at the Katanga HQ also suspected that the UN tried to deliberately provoke the gendarmerie. Any use of force by the latter would then entitle the UN to strike back in 'self-defence'. See 'Stabschefen vid HQ Katanga area överste SE Rosenius med synpunkter på utvecklingen i Katanga', letter from Rosenius to the Chief of Army, 20/8/1962, in HP48:Kongo.

<sup>474</sup> Georges Abi-Saab (1978), pp. 185–188, 190–191.

### *The Kamina deployment and the 'non-fighting' 16th Battalion*

By the time of the decisive military action in the last days of 1962, the Swedish contingent, now the 18th Battalion, operated from the large, former Belgian, air force base, Kamina. Here the Swedes had been positioned since April. As shown above, Wærn had been displeased with the military performance of the Indian/Ethiopian brigade during the December War. The management of the huge refugee camp located adjacent to the Swedish camp further added to his, and his battalion's, frustration. Immediately after the ceasefire in late December, Wærn started to pressure the UN Force Commander and civilian representatives for a transfer of the Swedish battalion from Elizabethville. By late March the ONUC HQ in Leopoldville had granted his request, and the transfer of the battalion to Kamina began shortly thereafter. This was good news for Wærn, since it meant that the battalion would get away from the 'unpleasant and in the end intolerable responsibility for the refugee camp.' Likewise, it meant that the Swedes would no longer answer to the 'particularly weak leadership' of the UN military HQ in Elizabethville.<sup>475</sup>

Even though the Kamina base was well inside and surrounded by 'enemy territory', the political climate was less hostile than it had been in Elizabethville. The Kamina base was located outside populated areas. The closest city was Kaminaville, some 24 kilometres distant. Furthermore, Kaminaville was a gendarmerie stronghold under the leadership of Kasongo Niembo, who was loyal to Tshombe. The city had no UN presence. Apart from the approximately 900 Congolese employed at the base, the soldiers therefore had far less contact with the native civilians or the gendarmerie than had been the case in Elizabethville. Leaving the provincial capital also meant leaving the journalists behind. As pointed out above, the fighting in September and December and the management of the refugee camp had led to intense media coverage of the battalion's whereabouts and actions. A large part of this coverage had described the battalion's work in sceptical or even critical terms, and the debate, as we shall see, continued over the first months of 1962. Wærn also acknowledged that after all that had been written, the lack of journalists in Kamina 'was not all bad' for the

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<sup>475</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 4, XIVK, 31/3/1962, p. 7.

battalion.<sup>476</sup> It was time for someone else to take the heat for the UN policy in Katanga. *Djungeltelegrafen* agreed, stating to the soldiers of the battalion that within the larger mission of bringing order to the Congo, the 14th Battalion had played its part with honour. In fact, it was not because of the workload or the dangers that the battalion had asked to be relieved, the paper argued, but rather

[t]he international reputation of Sweden, our closely observed work with the refugee camp, where every little mistake was scrutinized with a magnifying glass, and other difficulties that motivated the redeployment, which the Chief has requested and been granted.<sup>477</sup>

Looking back and judging by what the battalion had achieved, no one could ever say that the transfer was a flight from responsibility, *Djungeltelegrafen* added. In the rhetoric of the battalion, hence, it was the foreign criticism and the scrutinizing journalists in Elizabethville which made things ‘intolerable’, not the work itself. The request to be transferred from Elizabethville was therefore argued as necessary; staying put might otherwise have jeopardized the reputation of the battalion and thereby also the reputation of Sweden.

For the 14th Battalion, the stay at Kamina was short and predominantly meant organizing the base, including its defences. In May the 14th Battalion was relieved by the arriving 16th Battalion. After having commanded two battalions, Wærn now handed the responsibility over to his replacement, Colonel Sten Eggert Naucér.

During its time of service, the 16th Battalion was responsible for the defence of the base that it shared with the Swedish fighter group F22, and a UN Ghanaian battalion.<sup>478</sup> In Elizabethville the UN began phasing out the refugee camp in May, and at the Kamina base the battalion administered and oversaw the transit of former refugees to their homes in the Kasai

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid., p. 11, Bilaga 1, Bilaga 2:7.

<sup>477</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 6, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>478</sup> Small contingents from India, Pakistan, Norway and Canada were also located at the base.

province. Also, as a consequence of Secretary General U Thant's plan for Katanga's reintegration into the Congo, the Swedish battalion became responsible for the training of an ANC battalion which arrived at Kamina in August 1962.<sup>479</sup>

The Kamina deployment fitted well with Göransson's earlier notion of 'guarding Swedish interests', in the sense that six months of isolated deployment included few dramatic events when compared to the experiences of previous Swedish battalions. The political climate during the 16th Battalion's tour of duty was nevertheless tense, and patrolling units of gendarmerie at times surrounded the base. Although summarizing the spring and summer of 1962 as 'eventless', it still meant the soldiers had been forced to keep themselves on guard and high alert throughout this period. Hence, the situation limited the possibilities for leave or even short visits to Kaminaville. While it suited the Swedish government and the Defence Staff well to have their battalion away from the mercenaries, journalists and refugees in Elizabethville, it was nevertheless problematic for the battalion itself. As will be recalled from Chapter 4, the MPI had conducted a motive survey of the 16th Battalion before the tour of duty. The study had shown that an overwhelming majority of the soldiers had volunteered to serve based on the 'self-pleasing' motives of excitement, adventure, or to experience Africa.<sup>480</sup> None of these desires were fulfilled, even remotely, when compared to the 10th, 12th or 14th Battalions. As we shall see, the lack of excitement, dramatic events and, thereby, journalists at Kamina also made the press focus its attention on Elizabethville and Congo politics in general. Likewise, the discussion on what had happened in Elizabethville during the December War was still a debated subject, and hence concerned the now dissolved 14th Battalion. The effects of eventless isolation could soon be seen in Naulé's reports.

The atmosphere in general is good, even if a recent tendency to irritation can be traced because of our isolated location and the, at times, very trying service conditions. Especially noticeable is the lack

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<sup>479</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 141–144.

<sup>480</sup> MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, Table II:9, p. 32.

of 'civilian' recreation possibilities with opportunities to meet members of the opposite sex – or in general the possibility to go out at night to meet other people than those one wears down all day.<sup>481</sup>

*Djungeltelegrafen* also took it upon itself to comment on what seemed to be a widespread attitude in the camp.

Sometimes we become aware of ourselves acting in a way unfamiliar to us, we become irritated at our mates for the slightest reason ... we, more or less deliberately, want something to happen just to break the day-to-day routine ...<sup>482</sup>

This attitude was not constructive, the article continued, and to complain about it without doubt made things worse. While Naclér in his reports persisted in maintaining that the morale of his battalion was generally good, articles indicating the opposite continued to appear in *Djungeltelegrafen*.<sup>483</sup> When summing up the battalion's achievements in *Djungeltelegrafen* in October 1962, Naclér used the eventless guard duty as evidence of the great psychological stamina shown by the 16th Battalion.

[T]he soldiers, who after six months of this kind of service... still fulfil expectations, can surely look back on this six-month period with satisfaction.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 7, XVIK, 30/6/1962, p. 18. See also Kongorapport, nr. 8, XVIK, 31/7/1962, p. 14.

<sup>482</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 10, XVIK, 20/7/1962, p. 3.

<sup>483</sup> See *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 3, XVIK, no date, 1962, p. 6; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 9, XVIK, 6/7/1962, p. 8; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 10, XVIK, 20/7/1962, p. 10; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 19, XVIK, 22/9/1962, p. 11.

<sup>484</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 21, XVIK, 10/10/1962, p. 2.

In a way it can be argued that this particular battalion managed to fulfil the role of peacekeeper better than any other of the Swedish ONUC battalions. During significant political tension, no combat were initiated, no gross or systematic violations of human rights were committed on the battalion's monitored territory, and no dead soldiers of the 16th Battalion were sent home.<sup>485</sup> Its show of force at the Kamina base kept the surrounding gendarmerie passive, even at turbulent times in Elizabethville. It could therefore relatively unhindered conduct its peacekeeping tasks of transiting refugees, patrolling the surroundings, negotiating with the authorities in Kaminaville, and later also training the ANC battalion. Naclér tried to make this point in his concluding comments in *Djungeltelegrafen*, but still, from a soldiering point of view there was something deeply unfulfilling in passive guard duty, and especially so when it had not even been possible to be a tourist at times.<sup>486</sup> Also, they did not 'disturb the order' and thus were more or less left out, not only by contemporaneous journalists but also later historians. In fact, members of the 'non-fighting' ONUC battalions were not granted membership of the Swedish Congo Veterans Society until 1986. Until then the organization, from its formation in 1980, only allowed former servicemen of the 12th and 14th Battalions.<sup>487</sup>

### *Continued criticism and political concern*

Throughout 1962 the debates on what had happened in late 1961, as well as what was likely to happen in the future, continued in the media. In spite of

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<sup>485</sup> However, at the very end of the battalion's tour of duty, in late September, a UN DC3 was shot down and two members of the F22 were killed: Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 167–168; Kongorapport, nr. 10, XVIK, 30/9/1962, pp. 2–7.

<sup>486</sup> The lack of leave, and thereby the possibility to travel in and experience Africa, was the single most frequent complaint of the 16th Battalion troops, according to the MPI: MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga III, Table III:23, p. 49.

<sup>487</sup> Kongoveteranernas hemsida [website], 'Historik', [www.kongoveteranerna.se](http://www.kongoveteranerna.se) (accessed 20/4/2011). The term 'veteran' in a military context implies some sort of combat experience; something far from what all soldiers acquired during the ONUC. Another reason, and mainly promoted by the Society itself, for the initially exclusively 12th/14th Society was that it was these two battalions which later had to answer to accusations of excessive violence and misconduct in the Congo; an experience not shared by members of the other Swedish battalions.



the relative military success that had forced Tshombe back to the negotiating table, there still existed no clear vision or prediction concerning how the UN–Katanga conflict was to be resolved. In Belgium, criticism of the ONUC in late December 1961 and January 1962 reached its apex in an outburst of accusations. An example of how the arguments were presented was a Christmas card produced by the organization ‘Friends of Katanga’ that was also sent to the Swedish Embassy in Brussels, and forwarded by the ambassador to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The card showed a cartoon of a Swedish UN soldier in conversation with an Indian Gurkha counterpart. While the soldiers find out that they are both gangsters in their civilian lives, a bombed-out hospital is burning in the background. Under their boots lies what seems to be a dead Congolese civilian. The UN emblem is clearly visible on their helmets. The message was clear: Swedish soldiers under the UN flag were killing civilians in the Congo, and seemed not to care at all about it.<sup>488</sup> Even though the Belgian government had a more moderate, though UN-critical, approach, it had to take its country’s public opinion in consideration.<sup>489</sup> The Foreign Ministry of Belgium, for instance, politely asked that Swedish UN servicemen on their way to the Congo not wear their uniforms while making a stopover in Brussels. ‘The reason [for this is] that a stopover by Swedish UN troops in Brussels could lead to a Swedish–Belgian incident, something [the Belgians] at any cost wish to avoid’, the Swedish Department of Foreign Affairs commented.<sup>490</sup> Also, and as shown in an earlier chapter, Undén had felt it necessary to personally counter the criticism by a letter to the *Le Soir* in January 1962. In addition, powerful political opposition in the United States, headed by prominent persons like Herbert Hoover and Richard Nixon, had sharpened their criticism of the Kennedy administration’s outspoken support of the ONUC.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> See Image 9, ‘Christmas card’, UD HP48:Kongo, 22/12/1961.

<sup>489</sup> For further information on Belgian politics and diplomacy during the Congo crisis, see the memoirs of Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak (1971), pp. 357–401.

<sup>490</sup> ‘P.M.’, Department of Foreign Affairs, HP48:Kongo, 5/1/1963.

<sup>491</sup> ‘Till Hans Excellens Herr Ministern för Utrikes Ärendena.’: Letter from Swedish Embassy in Washington to Department of Foreign Affairs, in UD HP48:Kongo, 4/4/1962; and ‘Till Hans Excellens Herr Ministern för Utrikes Ärendena.’: Letter from Swedish

In order to contextualize both the criticism and defence of the ONUC in Swedish media, it is important to briefly view the international political climate. As discussed earlier, the Congo conflict from the outset in 1960 quickly became closely related to the ideological positions of the Cold War. Patrice Lumumba's left-wing rhetoric and positive attitude towards a possible Soviet intervention in the Congo in 1960 had led the US leadership under Eisenhower to direct the CIA to remove Lumumba.<sup>492</sup> As Lumumba hence became associated with the Soviets, his popularity in Washington, London, Paris and Brussels was low. The UN intervention in the Congo in 1960 soon limited Lumumba's possibilities of consolidating his power. In context, this meant that the UN in effect had put restraints on the Soviet Union's ability to become more involved in Congolese affairs. This was also the underlying reason for Khrushchev's severe political attacks on the UN and Hammarskjöld in 1960. From early 1961, however, the situation had become different. Tshombe had presented himself as a political opponent of Lumumba and a friend of Belgium. In February 1961 he was moreover accused of ordering and overseeing the murder of Lumumba, and therefore became thought of as a possible anti-communist ally in Africa. The UN intervention in Katanga therefore shifted the ideological position of the UN, silencing the criticism from Moscow while, as we have seen, stirring opposition in many Western states. One can note that the word 'imperialism', with its exclusively negative connotations, was used by the Soviets to describe the UN intervention in the Congo 1960 as well as by Western critics describing UN actions in Katanga the following year.

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Embassy in Washington to Department of Foreign Affairs, in UD HP48:Kongo, 3/1/1963.

<sup>492</sup> According to the senior CIA operative in the Congo at the time, Larry Devlin, the CIA was even instructed to assassinate Lumumba. While Devlin never had any intentions of carrying this out, he went along with the planning, but notes that the CIA in the end had no direct involvement in Lumumba's death. See Larry Devlin (2007), pp. 94–99.



Image 10. Belgian Christmas card, 1961.  
 'What did you do as a civilian?'  
 'I was a gangster'  
 'Oh, you too!'  
 'Conversation between Gurkha and Swede'

From the Swedish perspective, as shown in Chapter 4, the leading Swedish media had unanimously condemned Khrushchev's attacks on Hammarskjöld in their support for the United Nations' plan for the Congo. Especially *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* had tied Lumumba's vision of the Congo's future to Khrushchev's willingness to assist, which of course was seen as very dangerous.<sup>493</sup> *Aftonbladet* also noted Lumumba's leaning towards Moscow, but made sure to add that all forms of nationalization tendencies by African leaders always led to rumours of a communist takeover.<sup>494</sup> By late 1961 the 'imperialist argument' had been turned around and was now coming from the Right. It had also become clear that the situation in the Congo would result in another round of fighting between the United Nations and Katanga. By now the gap between the political right and the political left in the Swedish media became more visible, as prominent Conservatives in Sweden joined in the criticism. The later leader of the Right-wing Youth Association<sup>495</sup>, Birger Hagård, argued in *Svenska Dagbladet* that the UN had got it all wrong in Katanga.<sup>496</sup> The intervention there, now with the explicit goal of ending Tshombe's secession and removing him from power, was unfortunate in many respects, according to Hagård. Among other things, Katanga was the richest and most well-organized province in the Congo. Thanks to the large mining company, Union Minière, Katangans could enjoy a higher employment rate than other parts of the Congo. Consequently, Hagård continued, standards of education, health and income were higher in Katanga. Also, tensions between the white and black populations were far less intense in comparison to other provinces. Viewed as a whole, Katanga could therefore be considered more similar to a Western democracy than any other province in the Congo, Hagård argued. It was therefore not only wrong and irresponsible for the United Nations to interfere in Katanga, it was also dangerous for the Katangan people in the longer run. Gunnar Unger, political columnist in *Svenska Dagbladet*, had a similar view. In a column published in December 1961 he shaped his argument as a dialogue, pointing

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<sup>493</sup> See *Dagens Nyheter*, 19/7/1960 and *Svenska Dagbladet*, 20/7/1960.

<sup>494</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 16/7/1960.

<sup>495</sup> Swedish: Högerens ungdomsförbund

<sup>496</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 21/12/1962.

out that Sweden would never have been allowed its independence from the union with Denmark if the UN had existed and operated with the same logic in the sixteenth century.<sup>497</sup> What was now happening in the Congo resembled classic colonialism.

- It is on the UN's orders the intervention is carried out against Tshombe's white desperadoes.
- Yes, that may be. But it is also on the UN's orders that Swedish soldiers shoot coloured people. Perhaps you saw [the] dramatic account of the successful air assault on the train, which was raked by machine-gun fire from Swedish jets. Once one read about that, one was in a odd way reminded of earlier similar occurrences on the African continent, that did not gain the same undivided approval by the Swedish press: the Italians in Ethiopia, the French in Algeria, the Portuguese in Angola!<sup>498</sup>

Accusations of Sweden being part of a colonial enterprise in the Congo did not, of course, fit well with the political rhetoric. The growing disagreement about the fundamental motives and moral legitimacy of the ONUC displayed in leading Swedish newspapers worried the Swedish administration. As early as December 1961, Erlander noted in his diary growing criticism of the ONUC in Sweden, referring particularly to the 'Fourteen's Petition'. While it came as no surprise that fierce criticism would make itself heard, Erlander commented, it was far more surprising that 'we have managed to keep the opinion so well united ... on the Congo question ...'<sup>499</sup> Consequently, as the relatively eventless 1962 did little to lessen the criticism from parts of the Swedish media and furthermore was leading up to new military action by the UN, the Swedish government feared that the pro-ONUC consensus in Sweden would eventually collapse. After the final military operation, Operation Grand Slam (further discussed below), Swedish officials started to investigate how and when the Swedish troops

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<sup>497</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9/12/1961.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Sven Erlander (2011), p. 182.

could be removed. In an internal memorandum dated 23 January 1963, the Department of Foreign Affairs discussed the strategies. One main reason, seen therein, for a fast withdrawal was the domestic criticism, even though a tone of irritation could be noted.

In connection with a phasing out of the Swedish military mission it would be desirable to say something about Sweden's continued participation in the civilian help to the Congo. ... In this way one could counter the, both in Sweden and abroad, in places outspoken criticism that the UN mission has had too much of a military character to it ... . Furthermore, a statement this way would make a good impression within the UN and have [a] stimulating effect on other potential contributors, not least on those who have been loud in the above-mentioned criticism.<sup>500</sup>

The problem, obviously, was that even though Swedish officials now, for the first time in documentation, were expressing a will to withdraw the troops from the Congo, they could not just do that. Such a move would strongly contradict the political rhetoric used throughout the entire mission, both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, it would be a severe blow to UN–Swedish relations and most likely against the will of large sections of Swedish public opinion. The only way a withdrawal could take place was to convince the UN to ‘release’ the Swedish troops in a way that to all parties appeared to be in line with a UN-directed dispersion of the entire ONUC. The issue, the memorandum pointed out, was whether Swedish officials should covertly push for such a solution or if Sweden should wait for the UN to reach this conclusion itself.<sup>501</sup> To make things worse, Swedish officials realized that all the UN really had to do was once again, openly and for all to hear, request that Swedish troops stayed in the Congo, and thereby again put Sweden in a political position that would not allow a refusal. What is interesting is not that this is what happened, but rather that, politically, Sweden henceforth – from early 1963 – at least partly worked

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<sup>500</sup> ‘FN:s insatser i Kongo. P.M.’, 23/1/1963, in UD HP48:Kongo, p. 3.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., pp. 2–3.

with reluctance in the Congo. The reluctance should, however, not be seen as support for the scepticism towards the ONUC, but rather as a shared belief that the minimum UN military goals (the destruction of the Katangan separatist movement) actually had been met. Enough of the resolutions had been fulfilled and it was time to call the mission a success and go home. Eventually Sweden accepted sending both the 20th and 22nd Battalions, but both were limited in numbers and Swedish representatives to the UN had been instructed to inform the Secretary General that the units were only to be used cautiously, and never alone but always together with troops from other contributing nations.<sup>502</sup> The internal discussion had by now become exclusively about guarding Swedish interests and prestige rather than the future of Katanga and the Congo. Or as one internal memorandum put it:

The Congolese central army [ANC] will gradually take over the responsibility of upholding law and order. In this situation it is reasonable to assume that the European, mostly Belgian population, in Katanga will treat the Swedish and Irish units as their foremost protectors from assaults by the ANC. Sweden can end up in a position where we can have political difficulties withdrawing from a task that will not be pleasant, namely to act as a sort of 'cordon sanitaire' along racial lines and as protectors of a foreign minority ... . On the other hand, a Swedish request for a fast withdrawal could be used against us with the motivation that we only have been interested in 'tearing down', not building up.<sup>503</sup>

The political mission was thus to make sure that the units were gradually dissolved in line with a general UN withdrawal from the Congo, while at the same time making sure that the remaining troops did not end up in a position that in any way would hinder such a withdrawal or further aggravate a by now sensitive public opinion. The plan worked well and both the 20th and 22nd Battalions were stationed at the Kamina base, which they turned over to the ANC in February 1964 and finally left Katanga in May

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<sup>502</sup> 'Svenska insatser i Kongo. P.M.', 7/2/1963, in UD HP48:Kongo.

<sup>503</sup> 'FN:s militära verksamhet i Kongo. P.M.', 5/2/1963, in UD HP48:Kongo, p. 2.

the same year.<sup>504</sup> The enthusiasm with which Sweden committed military resources to the Cyprus UNFICYP in 1964 proves that the ONUC had not challenged attitudes towards the concept of UN peacekeeping in general.<sup>505</sup>

### *The 18th Battalion, military disputes, and Operation Grand Slam*

In October 1962 the 18th Battalion took over the responsibility for the Kamina base. The new Swedish commander, Nils-Olof Hederén, was also, like his predecessors, sector commander of northern Katanga. In his first report he described the situation as stable but tense. In order to continue and further build on the reputation of Swedish battalions as capable and ready, he initiated training exercises with heavy weapons and live ammunition. In connection with each exercise, the local political leadership in Kaminaville had been informed. The effect was, according to Hederén, that '... Kasongo Niembo [has] great respect for the UN at the base.'<sup>506</sup> The Kamina base was not easily defended and the workload continued to be substantial. Hederén also raised concerns about the heterogeneous Sector HQ and its personnel at Kamina. This HQ had to communicate in three different languages. Besides the large number of UN personnel of different nationalities, the sector commander needed to oversee the housing and well-being of the ANC battalion and the now approximately 5,000 civilians working at the base.<sup>507</sup> Disputes or misunderstandings were therefore not uncommon.

As has been earlier noted, both Carl von Horn and Jonas Wærn had expressed concerns and even outright criticism of the ONUC's organization and structure. This was not only a matter of disputes between the military and civilian branches of the organization, but to a large extent also between

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<sup>504</sup> Nils Sköld (1994), pp. 180, 182.

<sup>505</sup> Some soldiers were transferred directly from the Congo to Cyprus: Sköld (1994), p. 182. For official statements on the UNICYP, see 'Pressmeddelande den 6 mars' and 'Pressmeddelande den 13 mars', 1964, in *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m.m. rörande viktigare svenska utrikespolitiska frågor 1964* (Stockholm: Kungliga utrikesministeriet, 1965), pp. 71–73.

<sup>506</sup> Kongorapport, nr. 11, XVIII K, 17/11/1962, p. 3.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., p. 3.



the military contingents themselves. Although there had been many reasons for Wærn to request the transfer from Elizabethville in early 1962, he had explicitly complained about two matters: the lack of 'fighting spirit' and military leadership among other contingents. Heading into 1962, criticism of how the ONUC structure failed in its efficiency and the rivalry between contingents from different nations also started to appear more frequently in diplomatic circles.

In May 1962 the Swedish consul in Leopoldville, Bengt Rösiö, wrote a long letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that included a description of 25 cases of incompetence by the ONUC to exemplify the massive structural problems of the operation. The message was that these problems needed to be addressed at once or they would eventually wear down the mission and prove the critics right. Consequently, it would also, unfairly, drag the good reputation of Sweden through the mud. Even though Swedish battalions in the Congo, in this regard and in the eyes of Rösiö, were noted as being qualitatively better than other contingents, it did not matter as they were perceived, after all, as UN rather than Swedish units. In fact, Rösiö argued, this could on the contrary make things worse. As an example, he noted that the Swedish battalion could be praised for being the only one where civilian complaints about UN misconduct were treated seriously and investigated. However, this also meant that civilians had learned to accuse the Swedes for every instance of UN misconduct in order to assure that it would be properly investigated.<sup>508</sup> Another internal UN criticism from Rösiö did, however, include the Swedish contingent:

Within the UN force an inbreeding of alarming proportions prevails: one lives with one's countrymen, speaks one's own language, spends one's free time together [with others], eats in one's own messes and even uses national post offices instead of helping the Congolese to manage their own post service.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> 'FN i Kongo – teori och verklighet', in UD HP48:Kongo, 26/5/1962, p. 8.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

Furthermore, too few Swedes spoke French or had any knowledge of the Congo at all, Rösiö complained. A lack of experience among UN soldiers and administrators of the inner workings of a former colonial system was of course not strange at all, and in fact had been described as a desirable quality for any UN employee. Still, this had proven to be somewhat dangerous, according to Rösiö, precisely because that lack of experience, in combination with realities in the field, in many cases led soldiers to believe that only the Belgians actually knew how to handle the Congo.<sup>510</sup> To Rösiö, the administrative incompetence of the ONUC had in a sense led its members to rule themselves out as trustworthy partners with the Congo. Even though some of the concerns addressed by the consul could indeed be viewed as criticism of the Swedish battalions, it was nevertheless apparent that the other contingents were first and foremost to blame because of their half-hearted approach to the mission.

If something goes wrong – and it often does – there is nothing easier than finding a scapegoat: the Swedes blame the Irish, the Irish blame the Tunisians, the Tunisians blame the Malaysians, the Malaysians blame the Ethiopians and they all blame the Indians.<sup>511</sup>

Notably, Rösiö's 'blamelist' almost correlated with the different nations' geographical distance from Sweden. The warnings of a possibly damaged Swedish reputation also came from other places. For example, in 1962 the Swedish ambassador to Morocco, Lennart Petri, wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that even people Sweden could consider as friends,

... wonder how it could have happened that the Swedes – along with the Indians and the Ethiopians who, for different reasons, are not admired ... – so strongly have engaged in the 'Congolese civil war.'<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid., pp. 9–10.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>512</sup> 'Sverige och Katanga', in UD HP48:Kongo, 4/1/1962.

To some extent the military disputes also affected the 18th Battalion, in a way that was different to those confronting the 12th and 14th Battalions in 1961. In order to understand why, there is a need to look at the implications of the specific type of duty the battalions conducted. As seen above, the 16th Battalion had had an isolated time at the base. That being said, it had served during a time of political tension that limited the possibilities for off-duty activities outside the base. The battalion had been prepared and ready to assist had matters deteriorated. Not only did the situation turn out to lack combat, it also lacked the sort of policing missions or 'active peacekeeping' that could be associated with deployment in a city with large numbers of often disputing civilians, as had been the case in Elizabethville. Instead, the deployment in Kamina could be viewed as 'passive peacekeeping', which essentially involved doing nothing of an active or offensive military nature at all, while letting the surrounding gendarmerie know the *potential* of the battalion – something which, in turn, would be enough to keep the situation calm. This kind of 'passive peacekeeping', which was also a main duty for the 18th Battalion until the fighting commenced, was naturally seen as a good thing by the Defence Staff, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish government since it meant complete participation with good effect while limiting the risks. In fact, the restricted use of Swedish personnel in the Congo had been pointed out to the Secretary General in a letter from the Swedish government to U Thant, through UN Ambassador Rössel, in November 1962.<sup>513</sup> The problems of 'passive peacekeeping' were, however, in reality many. One such, earlier discussed in relation to the 16th Battalion, was that many soldiers found it morally destructive, which led to 'bad spirit' and disciplinary problems. The easiest way to resolve this would undoubtedly be to facilitate more off-duty activities for the soldiers, including sightseeing in Africa. It was not only argued by the battalion but also by the Chief of Army, who wrote to the Department of Foreign Affairs in November pointing out that it was urgent with respect to the unit's 'spirit and morale.'<sup>514</sup> In the Congo the 18th Battalion had welcomed the

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<sup>513</sup> 'Dear Mr. Secretary-General' and 'Aide-mémoire', in UD HP48:Kongo, 23/11/1962.

<sup>514</sup> 'Ledighetsresor för svensk personal i Kongo. En bilaga', in UD HP48:Kongo, 7/11/1962.

initiative, adding: 'We can all confirm that the demand is entitled and necessary.'<sup>515</sup>

However, the eventless duty was not only boring but also divested the battalion collective of the possibility for demonstrating their competence and abilities either as fighting soldiers or active peacekeepers. This correlated with Rösiö's concerns about 'national rivalries' among the UN contingents. Even the best units of the UN force in the Congo would inevitably be associated with the worst practices of other units. For the Swedish battalion, which certainly considered itself the best unit, this was problematic. The solution according the battalion was not, as Rösiö had argued, to become more integrated with other units in order to end national rivalries, but rather the opposite. The departing 16th Battalion's Chief of Staff, P. O. Eklund, made this point as a word of advice to members of the 18th Battalion. In *Djungeltelegraf*en he wrote:

The eyes of the world are upon us, also the world that is our brothers in the ONUC. We [the Swedes of the 16th Battalion] have realized the necessity of 'the preservation of Swedishness in the Congo.' I cannot underline this enough.<sup>516</sup>

The import of the argument was that everyone, international media and other UN contingents alike, when something went wrong sought to find scapegoats and point out wrongdoings or bad attitudes. Simply being Swedish, Eklund argued, could resolve a whole set of problems. In this context, 'being Swedish' meant behaving like typical Swedes in Sweden. This included a high degree of self-discipline, patience and fairness, and viewing oneself as part of a battalion of comrades, looking after one another. One should however be careful, it was argued in another article. In fact, the high standard and abilities could arouse envy and irritation among others, and one should be self-critical:

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<sup>515</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*en, nr. 6, XVIII, 23/11/1962, p. 10.

<sup>516</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*en, nr. 2, XVIII, 26/10/1962, p. 1.

Many of the abilities that we consider characterize us are in fact very good. But perhaps we think that they are so good we want them transferred to others. Then we are in deep waters. ... In our interaction with other nationalities it should always be clear for us that tactfulness and delicacy are essential if we are to succeed. We shall preserve the Swedishness, we shall keep together within our unit, but we shall be aware that contact with other nationalities demands adaptability.<sup>517</sup>

‘The Swede’, supposedly possessing a special set of attributes or skills that in most cases were superior and different from those of ‘other peoples’, was by no means a new theme in *Djungeltelegrafen*. Both Kjellgren and Wærn had, as discussed above, explicitly made this point before. It had served them well in building a battalion ‘teamspirit’. The problems for the 16th and 18th battalions were that they had not, unlike earlier battalions, been able to empirically ‘prove’ their abilities in combat or active peacekeeping, and hence could not use such experiences to build the same kind of camaraderie as the ‘fighting’ battalions before them. Collectively, the battalion somehow yearned for a way to show its competence and abilities beyond being best at organizing and managing a camp or manning guard posts. Seen from such a perspective, the offensive military action in the last days of 1962 almost came as a kind of collective liberation for the 18th Battalion.

As had been the case in September and December, the officers who led the attacks on Kaminaville and surrounding villages were generally very pleased with the performance of the Swedish soldiers. This was especially clear when compared to their fellow UN soldiers of the Ghanaian battalion and the enemy gendarmerie.<sup>518</sup> From the battalion’s perspective, the Kaminaville offensive could not be described as anything but a complete success. Not only had the soldiers been tested in live combat and performed well and courageously; they had, much due to luck, *Djungeltelegrafen* admitted, not suffered any casualties, either killed or wounded. Moreover, they had completely defeated a numerically superior enemy, while at the same time

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<sup>517</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 3, XVIII K, 2/11/1962, p. 3.

<sup>518</sup> See Kongorapport, nr. 13, XVIII K, 10/1/1963, App. 1 and 3.

inflicting only limited losses. To crown the success, the battalion had been met by cheering crowds in Kaminaville during what *Djungeltelegraf* called a 'triumphal procession'.<sup>519</sup> The shared combat experience, followed by active peacekeeping outside the base perimeter, undoubtedly added to the battalion's 'teamspirit'. Acting Battalion Commander Bengt Fredman wrote in *Djungeltelegraf*:

The assault on Kaminaville was quick business! The force of the fire and the rapid advance ... paralyzed the opposition ... . We have some reasons to be proud. ... [We are] grateful to be part of – and share – a comradeship that showed itself to be strong and steady even during the critical moments of the attack. ... Without the good feeling for 'the team' ... which officers and men showed, success would not have been possible.<sup>520</sup>

The importance of the successful Kaminaville attack for the collective self-confidence of the battalion could not be overstated. Just to have done anything out of the ordinary seems to have been welcomed. *Djungeltelegraf* commented:

Old boring Kamina Base has become dear old Kamina Base! Our attitude can sometimes change that fast. ... At the end of last year many of us probably thought of life on the base as dull. No trips in the real Africa, no travels. Then events happened in quick succession. Even though death lurked in the shadows at Mwitobwe [and] during the attack on Kaminaville ... the perhaps most lasting impression is that we have experienced something new.<sup>521</sup>

Unlike the September and December fighting, the UN operation in January 1963 effectively ended the Katangan opposition, both militarily and

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<sup>519</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 9, XVIII, 7/1/1963, p. 1.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>521</sup> *Djungeltelegraf*, nr. 10, XVIII, 18/1/1963, p. 2.

politically. In fact, the 18th Battalion had participated in 'winning the war' in the Congo, and fulfilling the military aspect of the intervention in Katanga. Thanks to the UN soldiers, the road to a unified and peaceful Congo now, at last, was open, *Djungeltelegrafen* continued. If the UN could use this opportunity to rebuild the damaged country, the effort and sacrifice Sweden as a nation had made would have been worthwhile.<sup>522</sup>

Also, dissimilar to the earlier combat events, the media, both Swedish and international, were by the battalion perceived as supportive of the UN operation.<sup>523</sup> The aggression was believed to have been initiated by the gendarmerie in Elizabethville, and the UN had as a response been forced into action. The outcome had meant Tshombe's fall from power, and a clear end to the UN involvement in the Congo had become politically visible. To some extent the comments in *Djungeltelegrafen* were true. After the fighting in January 1963, very few, even among the UN's harshest critics in Belgium and the UK, retained the idea of an independent Katanga. In Sweden, criticism, mainly from conservative newspapers, had peaked in 1962. The positions of the Swedish left- and right-wing media had never been further apart than when the tension in Katanga escalated in the winter of 1962. No one, apart perhaps from members of the 18th Battalion, as suggested above, wanted to see the Swedes become involved in combat; but while *Svenska Dagbladet* described the UN action as wrong, imperialistic and perhaps even illegitimate, *Aftonbladet* called it unfortunate but necessary.<sup>524</sup> In the last days of 1962, as the outcome of the offensive was still undecided, *Svenska Dagbladet* directed hard criticism towards the Swedish government, quoting Undén's promises of non-interference from 1961 and again pointing out that the UN had no mandate for offensive military engagements.<sup>525</sup> *Aftonbladet* in turn criticized *Svenska Dagbladet*:

No, the absurdity of this criticism ... is all too obvious. What one in vain tries to understand is what motives drive their standpoint, and

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<sup>522</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 9, XVIII, 7/1/1963, p. 2.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>524</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30/12/1962; *Aftonbladet*, 3/1/1963.

<sup>525</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30/12/1962.

what alternatives to [the] UN course of action – if they at all want the UN to solve the problems in the Congo – they see.<sup>526</sup>

It is both difficult and risky to speculate on what could have happened. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that a different outcome of the attack would in all likelihood have created severe disturbance between the military, the media and the government. The actual outcomes of events play a fundamental role in shaping the arguments about them. Had Tshombe and the gendarmerie not been forced to surrender as a consequence of Grand Slam, opinions about the operation would have been different. Likewise, had the attack on Kaminaville caused fatalities among the battalion's soldiers, the ONUC's defenders in Sweden would probably have had a tough year to come. Therefore, Grand Slam's positive outcome, both for the battalion and the UN generally, had a significant impact on public opinion. In this sense, the Kaminaville battle also became the battle of Swedish public acceptance of the ONUC and Sweden's role within it. There is, however, an important point to make in this context.

As will be recalled from Chapter 2, Philip Smith argued that war cannot be sustained for long if the 'cultural foundation', upon which a war is explained, is not in place. A key argument for the Swedish participation had been the belief that Sweden actually could help keep the peace in the Congo. This derived from a strong belief in the UN as a truly altruistic organization worthy of support and loyalty, and it resonated well with the cultural foundation. The Swedish casualties in 1961, the lack of political progress following the war in December, and the loud international criticism of the ONUC, had started to put this belief into question and hence began to create frictions that challenged the stability of the analytic trinity. The problem was foremost present in the media, where the arguments in leading newspapers became sharper during 1962. The military and the government likewise had had trouble recovering from the turbulent events of 1961. The solution had been to remove the Swedish battalion from Elizabethville and transfer it to – by comparison – calm and quiet Kamina. This without doubt had a stabilizing effect on the trinity. Above all, it eased the tension between

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<sup>526</sup> *Aftonbladet*, 3/1/1963.



the media and the battalion in the sense that there was little to report about the battalion's activities. It had also lessened the right-wing media's criticism of the government. Nevertheless, the transfer to the Kamina base and the absence of war up until the last days of 1962 had done little to address the larger issues about the Swedish battalions' ability to keep the peace in the Congo. During most of 1962, no political solutions to the crisis there could be seen. In other words, even though inactivity was better than an unsuccessful war, it was not an endurable solution to the Swedish problem if not combined with political progress in the Congo. This was not only true for public opinion, but to some extent also, as shown, for the battalions themselves. Hence, the inability of the UN to make political progress and the absence of solutions to the Katanga situation were becoming the problem that created 'friction' itself. It seemed the mission would go on forever or would lead to an ANC invasion of Katanga, resulting in the full-scale civil war the soldiers were sent to prevent.

The Grand Slam operation, or more specifically the execution and outcome of it, achieved, at least temporarily, a stabilization of the failing trinity. It gave the pro-ONUC side of the debate new arguments, the battalion a collective sense of purpose, and the government a visible, favourable conclusion and 'exit strategy' for the Swedish participation. Hence it brought back an attitude that the UN could actually to some extent solve the problems and bring peace to the Congo.

In terms of 'whys' and 'hows', as were discussed especially in connection with the September fighting in 1961, the situation in 1962 was somewhat similar. The argument was that since the motives and even legality of Morthor and Unokat were up for debate, the actual military competence of the soldiers involved was not given much attention. This stood in sharp contrast to the experiences of the 10th Battalion, whose 'adventures' along the railways had captured the attention and admiration of the media. The outcomes of the fighting, particularly that in September but also the December War, had been portrayed as political failures and the military engagements on the operational level as unsuccessful. This regardless of Wærn's objections; and his praise of the Swedish soldiers had found no other channel of expression than the army's own magazine, *Arménytt*. In late 1962 the 'whys' were still contested, and little energy was expended in the media on celebrating the performances of the battalion in particular. Also, similar to the events in 1961, the offensiveness of the military operation did

not allow for detailed descriptions or too laudatory comments on military efficiency. Unlike Morthor and Unokat, however, the aftermath of Grand Slam to a far greater extent answered the question of 'why', which in turn contributed to the 18th Battalion not being accused of misconduct or brutality as the 12th and 14th Battalions had been.

### *Conclusion*

Operation Grand Slam, which began in the last days of 1962, turned out to be the decisive military victory the UN needed to create a political window for withdrawal from the Congo. The Tshombe regime had been defeated and the Katangan secession had been ended. An independent Katanga was no longer a realistic alternative even for the anti-UN voices in Europe. UN troops, who had cooperated with ANC troops in the final military enterprise, remained in the Congo until the early summer of 1964. Reduced in numbers, they were mainly tasked with supervising the central government's military and political takeover of Katanga.

The outcome of Grand Slam could not have been more advantageous for the Swedish context. From early 1962 the aftermath of the December fighting in Elizabethville had intensified criticism of the UN both internationally and in Sweden. The right-wing press voiced its sceptical attitudes from September 1961 and even accused Sweden of participating in a neo-colonial enterprise in the Congo. The escalation of aggression from mid-December indicated that another round of fighting was soon to begin. For Swedish public opinion as well as the Swedish government and thereby also the stability of the trinity, any further substantial political or military failure would probably have been fatal. Based on the military success, the government could from 1963 argue that the Congo crisis had been resolved and that both the UN and Sweden would soon be able to leave the country. The sources indicate that the Department of Foreign Affairs argued that Swedish troops should as soon as possible be removed. The outcome of Grand Slam had created an opportunity to, at least rhetorically, claim the UN mission a success and the mandate fulfilled. In a way this meant that the UN now had an opening to bail out before another Congo crisis erupted.

The 16th Battalion relieved the 14th Battalion, which had fought in Elizabethville, in the spring of 1962. By now the Swedish battalions were located at the isolated Kamina base in central Katanga. There, the battalions had much less contact with the refugees, the gendarmerie and the journalists than had been the case in Elizabethville. For the Swedish Defence Staff and the government this was a good solution. By acting as a standby force at Kamina, the Swedish battalions could participate in the ONUC without being directly involved in the constantly hostile environment of the provincial capital. For the battalions themselves, this solution turned out to be less positive. The isolation and lack of leave began to erode the morale of the units. For the 16th Battalion, the stay at Kamina in this sense became collectively frustrating. Still, by its very presence there, the battalion controlled the surrounding territory even during times of violence in Elizabethville. Furthermore, it managed a refugee transit camp and later trained an ANC battalion. In fact, no other Swedish battalion lived up to the peacekeeping ideal role model more successfully than the 16th Battalion.

The 18th Battalion displayed a similar frustration from inactivity and a lack of purpose. The attack on Kaminaville on New Year's Day 1962 came as a welcome alternative to the daily routine. The military and political outcomes of the operation, combined with the absence of Swedish casualties, made the 18th Battalion feel successful and important.

## 9. Keeping the peace in the Congo

### *The theme of peacekeeping in the Congo*

The previous chapters have dealt with the fighting in 1961, and in them I have sought to primarily analyse what consequences for the trinitarian model the combat brought to the understanding of the mission. The chaos in Elizabethville and other places in the Congo, as well as the turbulence of international politics during that hectic time, certainly had enough of an impact on soldiers, media and opinion to become the core of what would be remembered about the ONUC. That being said, combat was not the primary activity of the Swedish soldiers during the mission. Most of the time they performed what could be considered normal peacekeeping activities. These included patrolling the streets, managing checkpoints, guarding important locations, negotiating between different groups, escorting people and cargos, managing the refugee camp, transiting refugees, and later during the mission also rebuilding parts of the Katangan infrastructure. Not being at war also meant that 'camp life' included different 'off-duty' activities like watching films, attending courses, sporting and sightseeing. During these times of relative peace, media coverage of the ONUC naturally decreased due to the absence of dramatic news. While the military engagements had triggered questions about motives and the legality of specific UN actions, times of relative peace created a space for the battalions, the media and to some extent also the government to contemplate larger motives and questions regarding the UN intervention in the Congo and elsewhere. This could be understood as times when the mission, far more than during the military engagements, corresponded to the pre-understanding of what Swedish peacekeeping duties ought to be. Peacekeepers kept the peace, rather than fought a war. That is to say, when the mission was 'in order'.

The following chapter seeks to continue the discussion from Chapter 4, where the initial preparations and motive constructions before – and during the beginning of – the ONUC were the objects of study. More specifically, the chapter aims at testing those perceptions against the rhetoric of the battalions themselves. This also means that the analytic node of the military, and more specifically the battalions has a predominant role here.

As will be recalled from Chapter 4, several motives were presented at different nodes of analysis in support of the mission. Central themes had been the sense of duty and loyalty to the UN. The feeling of loyalty was partly based on a notion of the UN as an altruistic world organization which represented and supported the new African states' demands for self-determination and independence. However, it also coincided with Swedish *realpolitik*. In the UN, Swedish officials had found a forum for an 'active foreign policy' and this allowed the small nation to act and be heard in the international arena, which in turn benefitted Sweden's claim of being non-aligned in the Cold War. In other words, a strong and well-functioning UN benefitted Swedish national interests. On a political level, to actively participate in the ONUC was therefore in part an act of self-interest and in a sense 'translating words into action.' There was, however, also a deeper meaning to the national duty. As discussed in Chapter 3, Sweden had fostered a self-image of moral superiority that in the context of the welfare state expansion in the 1950s and 1960s had led many Swedes to believe that their country in fact was unique in this respect. In combination with the active foreign policy, the 'Swedish Model' of organizing society for the benefit of all citizens through democracy and consensus became something that should, it was thought, if possible be exported to the new states in Africa. Therefore, the 'Swedish Model' or, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Rune Johansson's more descriptive term 'welfare nationalism', could be used as a blueprint or road map for other societies to follow.

In 1960 parts of the Swedish military had been sceptical towards the ONUC enterprise; this, however, by referring to the weakening of Sweden's defence capabilities that would result, rather than the mission's purpose. At the same time the volunteering soldiers had been enthusiastic about going to Africa. Following Haaland's notion of the model of the Homeland Defender, Huntington's discussion on civil–military relations, Cronqvist's descriptions of the 'militarized Swedish society', and further backed by the empirical results from Chapter 4, I argued that the 'collective self-image' of

the battalions reflected that of domestic society. It is therefore interesting to examine how those perceptions and the self-image came into play as they encountered the realities in the Congo. The results regarding the 'meeting with the Congo' have already been presented; for example, the descriptions of the Baluba and the management of the refugee camp. While these were consequences of particular events, this chapter focuses rather on the more general themes and relates to the notion of 'welfare nationalism'.

### *Racism and racism*

Within a story concerned with soldiers working in the Congo in the early 1960s it is impossible not to bring in a discussion on racism. Racism is a complex term that refers to something that can manifest itself in many different forms. In the core of racism, in whatever form, lies the assumption of a hierarchy between people based on biology, culture and/or ethnicity. Those terms, however, are just as hard to define. When writing about the 1960s there are few problems in finding expressions of different forms of racism almost everywhere one looks. Expressions of neo-colonialism, imperialism, structural and cultural racism or biological racism, are present in almost all types of studied texts during the Congo mission. While this is hardly surprising, it is not sufficient to simply state that Sweden and other nations in the Western world in the 1960s were racist societies and move on. Neither is it sufficient to claim that Swedish foreign aid policy, anti-colonial rhetoric or UN loyalty are proof of Sweden being a less racist society than any other Western country in the 1960s. The historian Tommy Gustafsson argues that Swedish racism during the interwar years was far from unsuspecting or naïve, but a 'state sanctioned science that pointed out the Swedes as clean and the others as unclean and subhuman'. In fact, Sweden had, with unanimous political consensus, established the world's first race biological institute.<sup>527</sup> The institute, established in 1921, spent its first 15 years measuring individuals, collecting vast amounts of data and publishing works on racial characteristics of peoples. In the 1930s criticism and scepticism towards the 'traditional' race biology became more frequent. From 1937, a new leadership brought about a shift towards a new focus on

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<sup>527</sup> 'The State Institute for Racial Biology'; Tommy Gustafsson (2007), pp. 210–211.

hereditary diseases and the influence of the environment. The institute also ended its quantitative mass collection of data. Finally, in 1958, the institute officially declared a 'complete rejection of the old "race hygienic" school' and changed its name to the more fitting Institution for Medical Genetics.<sup>528</sup>

The views of 'the other' have to some extent already been analysed. The Baluba as the 'irrational jungle warrior' was discussed in Chapter 6, and the encounter with the refugees in Chapter 7. As has been the case throughout this study, we are not here concerned with individual beliefs. Individual expressions of racism, in this study, become relevant first when they make themselves heard through the official rhetoric, mainly *Djungeltelegrafen*. While this approach most likely will conceal some of the more blatant forms of racism that may have been exhibited by some soldiers, it still lies outside the scope of this study.

As discussed in Chapter 4, official instructions had been given to the soldiers in the form of a manual. Among other things, the manual instructed the soldiers on how to interact with the native population. Although the manual instructed the soldiers to be considerate and to respect the native population and their culture, a condescending tone permeated the text. The range of new diseases that the Swedes inevitably would come in contact with while operating in sub-Saharan Africa also came to be closely linked to the natives of the Congo in a way that brings to mind Gustafsson's notion of the Swedes as clean and others as unclean. The fact that most Swedish soldiers spent parts of their service time in hospital fighting off some sort of tropical disease led more often than not members of the battalion to conclude that it was the natives who were unclean, rather than Swedes having weak resistance to the diseases. At best, both aspects were combined. The instruction manual several times pointed out that '[c]ontact with the natives shall for reasons of hygiene be limited to what is absolutely necessary.'<sup>529</sup> Further, washing one's hands should follow any physical contact with the natives. The Swedish battalions were by no means ignorant of the fact that

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<sup>528</sup> Gunnar Broberg (2002).

<sup>529</sup> Anvisningar för svensk trupps uppträdande under tropiska förhållanden, (Stockholm: Arméstaben, 1960), p. 14.

tropical diseases were a natural part of the environment and that most of the time infections and bacteria originated from nature rather than people. In fact a good 19 pages of the manual were devoted to information on how to avoid the dangers of the tropical climate.<sup>530</sup> It was not a matter of whether it was true or not that many Congolese natives carried unfamiliar viruses; they – like any population in contact with visitors – most likely did. Rather, it was the fact that they were deemed completely unable to do anything about it which was the essence of the condescending attitude. In relation to venereal disease, as an example, the manual stated:

The native population to a very great extent suffers from venereal diseases. Anyone who gives way to the emotions can therefore have one's life turned into tragedy.<sup>531</sup>

Of course, the warning could have been deliberately exaggerated to get the soldiers to refrain from sexual activity, but regardless of the purpose of such a warning an unflattering image of the entire Congolese native population was transmitted for the soldiers to read.

Straightforward biological racism, here understood as a hierarchy between supposed 'races' backed by some sort of biological differences, had lost its rhetorical legitimacy in the late 1940s, at least in the public discourse. It was therefore rarely found in *Djungeltelegrafen*. Rather, it was a cultural, religious and educational superiority of the Swedes to the Congolese that formed the foundation for a clear hierarchy and thereby racism. It was a hierarchy based on education and the organization of society. It did not rule out the *potential* of the Congolese to *become* educated and enlightened, but nevertheless treated modern Western democracy as the *only* valid role model to evolve towards. This was perhaps best captured in *Djungeltelegrafen* when a Swedish officer was interviewed in the autumn of 1961.

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid., pp. 27–46.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 18.



- Has the Major, during the Congo months, got any special or new impressions regarding the problems of black versus white – something we, back in Sweden, only rarely come in contact with?
- The African people ... are humans like us and we must treat them – and talk to them – as equals, even though not all of them are that yet, intellectually.<sup>532</sup>

The view of the Congolese in this way as mouldable humans who one day could be taught to become enlightened citizens of a modern, democratic Congo resembles themes from classic Christian missionary enterprises.<sup>533</sup> There are, however, some notable exceptions. First, Christianity, while not unimportant, was not the key component for becoming a modern society. Rather, as will be further explored below, it was freedom from oppression, access to democracy, human rights, economic prosperity, education and a healthy form of nationalism that were modernity's building blocks. Second, and more important, to carry out any larger programme of 'fostering', such as Erlander had spoken of, was not seen as a duty for soldiers. Rather, the Swedish battalions' job was to create the order and stability necessary for others to fill that role. After all, the soldiers were soldiers, not missionaries. The battalion priest of the 10th Battalion, Lennart Sydhoff, made this point in *Djungeltelegrafen*:

The old heathenism is ... hard to eradicate, the country is vast and hard to penetrate and the missionary activity long-term work. Despite all self-sacrificing missionary activity in the Congo there still remains lot to do. The most important thing right now is to create peace and order in the country, so that this work can continue and the inhabitants in this land of the future can be brought up to become independent, responsible democratic citizens with the will for mutual cooperation.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 16, XIK, 17/11/1961, p. 5.

<sup>533</sup> See, for example, Malin Gregersen (2010).

<sup>534</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 4, XK, 20/12/1960, p. 7.

This is important to note because the battalions, regardless of any 'greater' motives and attitudes held by the UN, Sweden or the Christian missionaries, did not view 'the fostering of the Congolese people' as one of their duties.<sup>535</sup> Instead, it allowed the battalion members to comment on and make fun of the current situation in the Congo, including its inhabitants, without feeling a personal responsibility for changing it other than ending the immediate hostilities or preventing the outbreak of violence.<sup>536</sup> Hence the Congolese natives, and among them specifically the Baluba, were repeatedly stereotyped in *Djungeltelegrafen*. For example, jokes about cannibalism were frequent.<sup>537</sup> Patronizing jokes about the Congo crisis and Congolese society were also thought of as entertaining.

POLITICS IN AFRICA: Two persons in a country that just gained its independence discuss politics:

- Who has been elected Prime Minister?
- Munga Bongo.
- And the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

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<sup>535</sup> The operational tasks of the battalion were always strictly formulated in military terms and orders, and were summarized in the battalions' Congo Reports.

<sup>536</sup> The battalion did participate in humanitarian aid as well, brought gifts to children, provided some health care and vaccination, not least because it was responsible for the refugee camp in Elizabethville; but such were not considered priority duties as long as the political and military problems had not been resolved. See Robert Andersson (2005), p. 45. Kjellgren and the 10th Battalion, for example, arranged for Christmas presents to be handed out to children in 1960. To the Swedish State Television he wrote: 'With the TV camera we have borrowed we can make documentaries on the children's lives and then when the Christmas presents are handed out in villages, hospitals etc. by Swedish Santas the camera of course will be busy so that the results can be shown to the people back home.' 'Till Sveriges Radio-TV', in FN-BAT X, Sekt. 3B, B26, Utg. Skriv.-telegr., KrA. It should here also be noted that the 20th and 22nd Battalions, which were on duty after the Katangan surrender, carried out more humanitarian work than their predecessors, among other things rebuilding parts of the Katangan infrastructure.

<sup>537</sup> See *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 7, XK, 1/11/1961, p.7; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11, XK, 8/2/1961, p. 3; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 19, XK, 7/4/1961, p. 10; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 20, XK, 14/4/1961, p. 5; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 23, XK, 5/5/1961, p.5.

- Munga Bongo.
- And Minister of Defence?
- Munga Bongo.
- Unbelievable! How is it he has been elected to all posts?
- He is the only one in the country, who owns a pair of trousers, a fountain pen, a suitcase and enough money to buy a gun...<sup>538</sup>

Or, as *Djungeltelegrafen* joked to members of the 12th Battalion: if you were bored and had nothing to do, you could always play games with your comrades. One such game could be ‘All beat all – a Baluba-influenced game’.<sup>539</sup> Perhaps the most stereotypical expressions in *Djungeltelegrafen* were, after all, the imagery it used. The front-page *Djungeltelegrafen* title was decorated with an image of a seemingly happy African native playing his drum in the middle of a dense jungle (see Image 10). The African native, when visually portrayed in *Djungeltelegrafen*, was often naked apart from a loincloth and often further caricatured.<sup>540</sup> Interestingly, the usage of such pictures, except for the title, for some reason vanished from the paper with the arrival of the 14th Battalion,<sup>541</sup> and the jokes became less frequent.

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<sup>538</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11, XK, 8/2/1961, p. 3.

<sup>539</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 14, XIIC, 2/3/1961, p. 5.

<sup>540</sup> Caricatures of the Congolese natives were primarily a theme in *Djungeltelegrafen* of the 10th Battalion. See *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 9, XK, 25/1/1961, pp. 8, 12; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 11, XK, 8/2/1961, p. 3; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 12, XK, 15/2/1961, p. 3; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 13, XK, 22/2/1961, p.9.

<sup>541</sup> With only a few exceptions; see *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 10, XXK, 19/9/1963, p. 4.



Image 11. *Djungeltelegrafens* embellished title.

Far more explicit than expressions of biological racism was the hierarchy between cultures. As argued primarily in Chapters 2 and 7, Swedish society was thought of as superior to all others, not just the Congolese but in many respects those throughout the world.

*The old and the modern Congo and Sweden as a model*

While the biological racism started to be seriously contested in the 1930s and 1940s, the structural and cultural racism was as strong as ever and, according to Maria Eriksson Baaz, continued to evolve through the early theories of modernization in the 1950s. According to this way of thinking, the development of society was an evolution from the traditional to the modern. The highest form of modern society, and therefore the goal of evolution, was pre-decided as Western democracy. While this was a universal path of evolution that every country was destined to travel at some time, it was nevertheless possible and – if done correctly – desirable to speed up the process by economic, technical and moral ‘modern inputs’ from the already developed countries.<sup>542</sup> Agneta Edman notes that Swedish travelogues of the time hinted that Swedish history could work as a sort of road map; a notion that ‘our past is the others’ present’.<sup>543</sup> Explicit examples

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<sup>542</sup> Maria Eriksson Baaz (2001), pp. 168–169.

<sup>543</sup> Agneta Edman (2004), p. 169.

of this line of reasoning can be found in *Djungeltelegrafen*. It can also be directly connected to the Congo crisis itself.

As the 14th Battalion finally left Elizabethville in early April 1962, it had participated in the 'December War' and for several months been responsible for the large refugee camp. In a summarizing article in *Djungeltelegrafen* entitled 'Goodbye Katanga',<sup>544</sup> it was argued that the reasons for the conflicts in the Congo could be found in the Katangan strive for independence, and that it was mainly an economic dispute. One should remember, *Djungeltelegrafen* continued, that Katanga was a fertile territory, and rich in natural resources, copper in particular. This generated an income far greater than in the rest of the Congo, an income the Katangan government did not want to share with Leopoldville. The fundamental problem therefore was the lack of solidarity between people in different parts of the country; a phenomenon unknown in Sweden, *Djungeltelegrafen* argued. The lack of a shared past, in contrast to that of Sweden or even Europe as a whole, could be explained by the absence of a unifying notion of nationalism in the Congo. 'The Congolese have not much more in common than skin colour'; while in contrast Swedes and Spaniards, for instance, shared a common cultural heritage, *Djungeltelegrafen* argued.<sup>545</sup> Solidarity and a healthy collectivism in the form of nationalism<sup>546</sup> were treated as natural ingredients in well-working Western societies and therefore among the last milestones on the long road of modernization. Considering the 'short' history of the Congo, it was not at all strange that the Europeans had come so much further in consolidating their nations. In fact, Swedish history could even be used as a yardstick to measure the level of Congolese development. To find an equivalent era in Swedish history, *Djungeltelegrafen* turned to the formative period of the Swedish nation under King Gustav Vasa (ruling 1523–1560). This was the time when the central government

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<sup>544</sup> The battalion was transferred from Elizabethville to Kamina and therefore never actually left Katanga.

<sup>545</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 6, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>546</sup> What the term nationalism here meant was not explained by *Djungeltelegrafen*. In the article it seems to refer to a unifying identity that would bring the many tribes and peoples living in the Congo together in creating a nation built on genuine solidarity between its nationals.

fought the country's separatist movements, *Djungeltelegrafen* noted, referring in particular to the Dacke Feud (1542–1543). In a way it was therefore unjust to expect too much from the Congolese.

Without boasting about our own hard-earned level of judgement, we must establish the fact that the Congo has not reached further than the Sweden of Gustav Vasa and the inhabitants of Katanga (mostly the whites) no further than Dacke's [locals].<sup>547</sup>

The much-needed national solidarity could, of course, best be created by 'a highly educated [Congolese] class of leaders that unselfishly look to what unites rather than what separates', according to *Djungeltelegrafen*.<sup>548</sup> Because there existed no such persons in leading positions in the Congo, it was hard to see how this change for the better could be brought about without the involvement of the UN. The general lack of education among the Congolese could be traced to the former Belgian administration. This earlier colonial power had overlooked its educational obligations in the Congo, choosing instead economic gain. By doing so it had created the problem, as the educational system under Belgian rule did not allow a higher educational level than secondary school. Still, in reference to the above idea of the evolution of society, Belgium had to be credited for taking the Congo through 700 years of development, from 'stone-age level' to 'Gustav Vasa level' in only 70 years, even though this was fuelled by greed rather than planned nation-building, the paper continued.<sup>549</sup> The conclusion had to be that the Congo needed, and was entitled to, the help of those further along the path of social evolution. Here the main difficulty was with the earlier experiences the Congolese had had, and certainly in some parts still had, with the white man. The white man's future in Africa was therefore uncertain, another article argued.<sup>550</sup> Without doubt, *Djungeltelegrafen* continued, the white man had acquired the skills and knowledge to

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<sup>547</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 6, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 3–4.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>550</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 8, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 4.

administer a country, even an African country, and should therefore remain in Africa to help the new countries develop and consolidate, however in the shape desired by the UN, whose intentions were fuelled by humanitarianism rather than greed.<sup>551</sup> The dark era of colonization and slavery was over, and one could just hope, *Djungeltelegrafen* continued, that the well-founded mistrust of the old colonial powers could be reversed because 'anyway, the peoples of the world, regardless of skin colour, need each others' commodities and services in a geographically shrinking existence.'<sup>552</sup> Notably, in the passage above, the Belgians were not accused of wrongfully interfering in the Congo in the first place. Rather, it was their sinister way of doing it and their selfish agenda that inevitably had led to the violence and suffering in the country. An intervention backed by a genuine willingness to help, such as that enacted by the UN, would only benefit Africa.

Some stories in *Djungeltelegrafen* of individual meetings with Congolese natives provided 'empirical evidence' of the 'potential' among the natives. In one such story the writer described his meeting with a young souvenir salesman, Albert.

Albert ... has a burning longing to study to become a teacher. ... I speak English with Albert, but he also knows some German, besides French that along with his African language are his native tongues. ... Albert wants to know my attitude to the problems in Katanga. He wonders why we Swedes, that he knows are peace-loving, have come to the Congo with guns. ... Carefully and with great concern I try to answer and in the course of the conversation I find an immense and honest thirst for knowledge. ... Such youths as Albert offer promise of the future.<sup>553</sup>

Such stories sent a message that at least parts of the young generation of Congolese stood ready to march along the road of 'Western evolution' if they were just given the chance. Consequently, the young man was given a

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., pp. 5–6.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., pp. 5–6.

<sup>553</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 12, XVIK, 3/8/1962, p. 14.

few extra coins and advised to write a letter to the Board of International Aid in Sweden, whose address was provided. At the same time other meetings resulted in other stories. One such story in *Djungeltelegraf* came from a Swedish patrol's meeting with an indigenous tribe in the Kivu province; a meeting with the old and slowly vanishing Africa. Like most of the old indigenous tribes, *Djungeltelegraf* wrote:

... the Batwa tribe [is] a tribe dying out. ... At the time of our visit, the chief only ruled 40 individuals. The rest had died or moved to other places. It struck us how many old people lived in the village.

An old woman sat shrunken, rocking on the ground. She looked very old, was emaciated and had shrivelled breasts that were not covered by any cloth.<sup>554</sup>

The article went on to describe how the patrol gave a youngster a sweet. 'Before we could react he had put it in his mouth with paper and all.' The older villagers were allowed to play around with the Swedes' cameras and recording devices, much to their apparent amusement. The soldiers also bought some 'exotic' weapons and bracelets, even though the bracelets did not come with '[a]ny fantastic and meaningful story of protection from sorcery ...'<sup>555</sup>

The meeting with the indigenous tribe of the Kivu province was presented in terms that bear a resemblance to the explorer's fascination with an old and very exotic culture. Still, it was a tragic story. The local tribe represented the old – and in some sense 'genuine' – Africa<sup>556</sup> that had to die to give way to the new and modern continent. Unlike the case of young Albert, there was no future for them or any other old tribal community. Instead of offering the tribesmen contact with the Board of International Aid, the patrol promised to 'in the form of pictures and [audio] tape bring something of

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<sup>554</sup> *Djungeltelegraf* nr. 17, XVID, 8/9/1962, p. 2.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., pp. 3–4.

<sup>556</sup> An article in *Djungeltelegraf* nr. 7, XIVK, no date, 1962, (p. 1) had also used the term 'the real Africa' in regard to the Kivu province.



their culture with us out to other people.’<sup>557</sup> In a sense interpretable as recognizing that one day such would be the only evidence that the tribe had once existed.

To, after all, touch upon a generalization of individual attitudes vis-à-vis the Congolese natives, one can again turn to the statistics. As will be recalled from Chapter 4, there are three different statistical studies of Congo veterans.<sup>558</sup> The MPI survey is of special interest since the institute asked the 16th Battalion members questions immediately before and after their service in the Congo. As was presented in Chapter 4, a significant 46% of the soldiers had expressed a ‘negative’ or ‘negative + neutral’ attitude towards the natives before the mission, while only 4% had expressed a ‘positive’ or ‘positive + neutral’ attitude.<sup>559</sup> At the end of the time of service of the 16th Battalion the same questions were asked again. By now the ‘negative’ and ‘negative + neutral’ had dropped to 29%, while the ‘positive’ and ‘positive + neutral’ had risen to an identical percentage. Those stating ‘I do not know’ had dropped from 39% to 20%.<sup>560</sup> In Robert Andersson’s 2005 study of the Congo veterans, the ‘negative’ (39%) and the ‘positive’ (37.8%) show a similar split in positive and negative attitudes among the soldiers.<sup>561</sup> Naturally, statistics like these are of limited value for generalizations about attitudes towards the Congolese, but for the 16th Battalion it can nevertheless be noted that the battalion, collectively and as defined by themselves, had a far more positive attitude towards the native Congolese than they had before they left.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 17, XVIK, 8/9/1962, pp. 3–4.

<sup>558</sup> MPI (1962); Lars Frost (1997); Robert Andersson (2005).

<sup>559</sup> MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga II, Table II:22, p. 37. 1963. 36% said they had no opinion, or did not answer the question.

<sup>560</sup> MPI Rapport Nr. 24, Tabellbilaga IV, Table IV:32, p. 75. 1963.

<sup>561</sup> Robert Andersson (2005), p. 80. In Frost’s survey the question was phrased differently: ‘How were your relations with the natives?’, a question to which 78% replied ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Lars Frost (1997), p. 16.

<sup>562</sup> As described in Chapter 8, the 16th Battalion was the battalion with the least hostile contact with the natives up until the end of the Katangan secession and the arrival of the 20th Battalion. Even though isolated at the Kamina base, parts of the battalion worked at the transit refugee camp at Kamina. Andersson’s study further puts the change towards a more positive attitude into question. According to his results, the

### *Humanitarianism and self-criticism*

To verbally or in writing express views of cultural superiority or even racism does not, however, rule out that the members of the battalions at that time viewed themselves as humanitarians. An important component of the 'welfare nationalism' described in Chapter 2 was the widespread belief that Swedish society *objectively* was the world's best in many aspects. The Swedish battalions, as we have seen, were by no means disconnected from the 'cultural foundation'. The description of Sweden as a role model for the Congo was no less thought of as genuinely humanitarian and no less backed by good intentions than Tage Erlander's wishes to export the Swedish Model alongside the foreign aid programme.

The battalions were tools of the UN administration. Their mission and tasks were handed to them and their job was to carry them out to the best of their ability, although sometimes with substantial autonomy. For example, the refugee camp was in many of its aspects a construction by the Swedish 12th Battalion. Also, the battalions did some humanitarian work on their own initiative. One example was the fund collection for medicine organized by the 20th Battalion. The battalion collected 6,000 Swedish crowns and also wrote to medicine suppliers in Sweden asking for free medicine to be handed out to the Congolese.<sup>563</sup>

Were one to posit an overall view of the Congolese, it would undoubtedly be that they were all victims of some sort. Some, like the Baluba warriors, Katangan gendarmerie and sometimes even Tshombe himself, were thought of as misled or tricked, while others like the poor, the refugees, the women

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change of attitude was different. 26% of his respondents describe that their attitudes became more negative during the mission, while only 6% described a positive change. Andersson's study is, however, conducted mainly with soldiers of the 12th and 14th Battalions, which both fought in Elizabethville and managed the large refugee camp. Such results, on the other hand, imply that the 12th and 14th Battalions had a significantly more positive view of the native Congolese before the mission than the 16th Battalion. Robert Andersson (2005), pp. 8, 80.

<sup>563</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 7, XXX, 20/7/1963, p. 1; Kongorapport, nr. 19, XXX, 15/7/1963, p. 9, Bilaga 2.

and children unfairly had to pay the consequences of the conflict. *Djungeltelegrafen* did not hesitate to compare the history of the Congolese people to the history of the Native Americans, the history of Afro-Americans or to the system of apartheid in South Africa. A class of 'land-hungry' Europeans had unjustly ruled the Africans for a century, and the Africans' mistrust and sometimes hatred of the Belgians, the Portuguese, the French and the British were well-founded, according to *Djungeltelegrafen*. Even animals enjoyed more freedom and rights than some Africans, the paper complained.<sup>564</sup> Such an understanding of the situation in Africa generally, and in the Congo specifically, naturally created a context in which the UN mission to the Congo always would be compared to the former and contemporary imperialists. And since nothing could be worse than the old colonial slave traders, the UN mission, in the view of its members, would be by definition humanitarian.

The meeting with the natives in Africa was complex. The encounters were numerous, over a period of five years and during a wide variety of contexts. If one looks at *Djungeltelegrafen* as a kind of representation of the collective view of the meeting with the inhabitants of the Congo, this becomes clear. It is important to remember that even though *Djungeltelegrafen* at times discussed the future of the Congo or the causes of the conflicts, the battalions, in their own eyes were not part of any missionary enterprise or foreign aid agency programme. The articles in *Djungeltelegrafen* did not forward opinions designed to influence the UN, the Congolese or Swedish public opinion; they were observations aimed at explaining the situation the soldiers were in, or just interesting stories for the amusement of the readers. In political terms the battalions saw themselves as tools of those who knew what to do, whether being the Swedish government or the UN. It was one thing to share experiences internally with the group; it was, however, not a soldier's job to officially push an opinion beyond what he could possibly know anything about, *Djungeltelegrafen* argued.<sup>565</sup> Even though Swedish society – with its domestic peace, order and solidarity – could be understood as constituting a good role model and a goal to strive for by other countries,

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<sup>564</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 8, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 1–6.

<sup>565</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 14, XXX, 16/11/1963, p. 9.

this also meant that Swedes actually knew little about other peoples' hardships, history and values, whether being the Congolese or the Belgians.

We Swedes – a small nation – without racial tensions, a homogeneous nation with only negligible minorities ... perhaps too easily want to be the norm and the conscience of the behaviours of others. The question is whether we as a nation can afford to be so confident.

We should of course not back down from our understanding that man's right to happiness and prosperity is independent of skin colour and so-called race, but we can promote our opinions in a quiet way and it is upon us in the UN-bat, who are in the spotlight, to complete our UN service with a conviction of the true UN mission to unite ... a world with people free from need and fear.

It is unfortunately likely so, that in spite of our service within the UN, we are treated as Swedes and considering our rather remarkably high standard more is demanded from us than others. We are more exposed to criticism. It is a sad fact that is unavoidable until every UN soldier becomes stateless and anonymous during his UN service.<sup>566</sup>

A *Djungeltelegrafen* article from the last days of the 20th Battalion's time of service explained further:

The country we now leave, the continent we now leave ... have enormous problems that must be solved. Political, economic and educational problems of such proportions that those who work with them do not yet know which way is the right one. ... The best we can do for the Congo, when we now are ready to leave, is to let the country be free from what we think or consider. ... Many well-

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<sup>566</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 6, XIVK, no date, 1962, pp. 4–5.

informed [persons] in and outside the country are working with those problems. Give them peace in their work!<sup>567</sup>

The soldiers were explicitly warned against thinking they had acquired any deeper understanding of the internal problems in the Congo, just because they had been in the country for six months.

*Conclusion: A Swedish man's burden?*

In conclusion it can, on the one hand, be said that the Swedish battalions did carry with them the understanding of Sweden as the role model for how a society should work for the benefit of all. The 'high standard' of the Swedish battalions in this sense did not end with their military discipline or efficiency; it concerned all aspects of the battalions' work. The Swedes in the Congo, in line with the notion of 'welfare nationalism', collectively viewed themselves as closer to the idealistic and humanitarian vision of the UN than any other actor in the Congo. Still, the meeting with Congolese society and its inhabitants was imbued with racist undertones. The clear hierarchy between the Swedes and the Congolese was mainly established through a notion of Sweden as being a superior society in terms of social evolution. Sweden was everything the Congo was not. Sweden was law-abiding, politically stable, technically advanced, Christian, homogeneous, hygienic and characterized by national solidarity among its enlightened and educated citizens. In short, Sweden was rational and modern while the Congo was irrational and undeveloped. In this context the Congolese were generally viewed as uneducated and immature. Nevertheless, the reasons for the tragic conditions in the Congo, when discussed, were firmly attributed to the former colonial power and the evil white men. The white man in Africa was, however, not perceived as by definition evil. The white man had, during the course of history, earned an enlightened mind and valuable skills, far superior to the underdeveloped African, that he now had an obligation to offer the Congolese, it was argued. In fact, if one could imagine a highly educated, skilled and rich white man stripped of the egoism and hunger for

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<sup>567</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen* nr. 14, XXK, 16/11/1963, p. 9.

land, profit or power or, indeed, a hidden agenda, one could imagine the rescue of Africa. Needless to say, such men were more likely to be found in Sweden than anywhere else. The real battle for Africa in this sense was between the good white men and the bad white men. In this epic struggle the Congolese were no more than pawns on a chessboard. The problem for the UN was that all nations, including those containing a lot of bad white men, were members, which made it hard for the organization to live up to its true intentions. This often led to inefficiency in the field, much to the irritation of the Swedish battalions.

At the same time the internal goals of the battalions were limited. They did not view themselves as politicians, missionaries, or most of the time even as aid workers. They were soldiers in the service of the UN. Hence they were tools of the organization, not the solution to the problems. Furthermore, each battalion had a service time of six months and thereby, unlike the political mission, always had a clear end in sight. The battalions, therefore, naturally had to limit their goals to what could be achieved by them, thereby defining success differently than the UN, Swedish media or the Swedish government. This allowed the battalions to in *Djungeltelegraf* comment on problematic situations in the way they had experienced them, while not always explaining how and by whom the problems should be fixed.

Finally, and again, we have here been concerned with the collective and rhetorical level of the Swedish battalions' views on the relationship with the Congolese. In a sense it is therefore a 'polished' surface, effectively concealing misconduct and gross expressions of racism, as well as individual humanitarian efforts.



## 10. ‘We are in the Congo now’

### *Fighting a war in the Congo: three levels of war?*

– We are in the Congo now! That phrase has become something of a universal answer down here, when something does not develop the way one had expected it to.<sup>568</sup>

In its ideal form, peacekeeping is about keeping the peace. The idea is simple. The presence of international peacekeepers is thought of as sufficient to deter a large-scale conflict from erupting. The UN blue helmet is supposed to be the mark of neutrality. The peacekeepers do not solve conflicts; rather, the idea is that they will create the time and the space for others to do so, preferably the conflicting parties themselves. Still, in order for this equation to work, the peacekeepers need to be a deterrent. That is why soldiers do the job. If the understanding of a peacekeeping mission is that this arrangement will work, there should be little political or public opposition within the contributing country to carrying it out. Even if the Congo mission was from the outset labelled ‘likely to be dangerous’ by the Swedish press, it was widely endorsed in general. The case of the UNEF in Egypt had shown that peacekeeping could be effective without interfering with domestic or international politics.

This study has mainly dealt with the dramatic combat episodes of the ONUC that involved the Swedish battalions. The approach contains methodological advantages as well as disadvantages. The focus on combat situations and their immediate aftermath in Swedish media and politics, as

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<sup>568</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 4, XK, 20/12/1960, p. 8. See also the expression used in, for instance, *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 23, XK, 5/5/1961, pp. 3, 6; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 10, XIK, 1/9/1961, p. 6; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 2, XVIII, 26/10/1962, p. 2; *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 19, XVIII, 30/3/1963, p. 2.



well as in the Swedish military institutions, could easily lead to a presumption that combat was a predominant activity. It was not. Nevertheless, it generated massive attention from the media and challenged public opinion's understanding of the mission. The combat episodes during the mission created a disturbance that challenged the interplay between the different nodes of analysis.

This chapter seeks to elucidate the conclusions of the study. First, the analytic trinity and Haaland's 'ideal military role models' are discussed in combination with the empirical results of the study. Second, the notion of the battalions' collective self-perception and its relation with the cultural foundation are summarized.

### *The trinity of peacekeeping and the peacekeeping role model*

Clausewitz's understanding of war was composed of three elements: the people, the government and the military. For any war to be sustainable, those three societal elements need to support each other. Inspired by the trinitarian understanding, this study has explored the Swedish peacekeeping effort in the Congo in the 1960s. Naturally, peacekeeping is perceived as something rather different than warfare but can nevertheless be analysed using a trinity model. Since the UN intervention in the Congo came to include combat and other violence, it becomes interesting to observe how this affected the trinity. Based on an initial idea of what peacekeeping actually meant, all parts of the trinity seemed to be more or less united in their conviction that it was the right thing to do. When concluding the findings of this study, it is therefore reasonable to begin by discussing a Swedish 1960s ideal peacekeeper role model.

In Chapter 2, Torunn Haaland's ideal soldier model of the Homeland Defender was argued as capturing the context within which the Swedish Congo battalions were recruited and of what values that military culture embodied. The concept of the Homeland Defender basically is the classic model of the 'citizen soldier', whose overall purpose was the 'protection of the homeland and nation-building'.<sup>569</sup> The compulsory military service for

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<sup>569</sup> Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007), pp. 8–9. See also Table 1 in my Chapter 2.

all men in combination with a strong civil defence structure in Sweden, and the low intensity – yet constant – threat caused by the Cold War, made the military–civilian relationship strong. The Homeland Defender's main emphasis on 'representativeness and democracy' and the core values being 'as similar to civil society as possible', from Haaland's ideal model, were applicable, as shown in Chapter 4, to Swedish soldiers in the 1960s.

As argued by Haaland, the peacekeeper is not a military role model itself but rather a form of duty accepted and carried out by soldiers fostered within other role models.<sup>570</sup> Nevertheless, the ideal role model of the peacekeeper can be used analytically in order to highlight the problems that arise when Swedish Homeland Defenders accept the role of Swedish peacekeepers. First, and also as a significant part of the problem itself, it should of course be recognized that there exists no consensus regarding what constitutes an ideal peacekeeping role model. For the post-Cold War era this is particularly obvious. Yet it seems possible to construct an ideal peacekeeper model valid for the Swedish context in 1960.

Dag Hammarskjöld's and Lester Pearson's invention of UN peacekeeping rested on three main ideas which can also serve as the definition of the ideal peacekeeping role model. First, neutrality – or impartiality – was to be the essential rationale of all peacekeeping missions. A peacekeeper's mind should always be focused on achieving a fair and impartial solution to all conflicts in his area of responsibility. This also meant that peacekeepers were not supposed to identify or resolve any underlying causes for conflict. Rather, they should identify and hinder any of those causes from manifesting themselves in open conflict or civilian suffering. This is a significant difference that appears more conspicuously as the notion of the military role perception is analytically separated from the larger political motives of the ONUC. As shown in the study, the notion of neutrality and impartiality was impossible to sustain in times of combat for the Swedish battalions operating in the Congo in 1961–1962.

The second fundament of classic peacekeeping is that peacekeepers are accepted and welcomed into the area of operation by the belligerents. Naturally, the level of acceptance of peacekeepers into an area of operation is

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<sup>570</sup> Torunn Laugen Haaland (2007), p. 12.

dependent on who is asked to give their consent. The legitimate government of the Congo in Leopoldville naturally did consent to the UN's deployment in Katanga. Certainly also Tshombe gave Hammarskjöld his approval for sending peacekeepers in 1960 but soon after changed his mind. In fact, during most phases of the mission in Katanga the UN battalions were not at all welcomed by the provincial government. Still, other groups in Katanga most likely approved of the UN presence.

The third and final fundament of traditional peacekeeping as stipulated by Hammarskjöld and Pearson, and as a natural consequence of the ideas above, was that a peacekeeping force should never open fire other than in self-defence. As shown in this study, both the UN in New York and the Swedish government never deviated from the description of all combat as defensive. Politically this might well have been seen as a reality, since all combat in one way or another can always be argued to be defensive in nature. When the gendarmerie closed the roads in Elizabethville, they severed the communications and freedom of movement between different UN strongholds in the city. In order not to be tactically constrained, the UN cleared the roadblocks by force; an action that notably can be viewed as both offensive and defensive. Rhetorically, the slightest use of force by an adversary can be used to explain massive military response using defensive terminology. In its extreme form this is today known as a 'pre-emptive strike'.<sup>571</sup> However, in the area of operation and for the battalions participating, it is still an attack, and combat is thereby of an offensive nature. Nevertheless, is it here of less importance whether the combat events in the Congo were offensive or defensive. Rather, what becomes interesting is how and by whom the combat events were perceived as being offensive or defensive, and the practical consequences such labelling brought.

If we consider a Swedish 1960 peacekeeping role model following Haaland's scheme, a comparison can be made (see Table 3). The 'overall purposes' for the peacekeeper, hence, are to keep the peace and to protect civilians. Those were the explicit reasons voiced by the Swedish government and supported

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<sup>571</sup> Even though a pre-emptive strike can be rhetorically justified, it is of course difficult to do morally. For one thing, it violates the principle of 'proportionality' and is thereby morally unjustified according to the just war theory.

by media opinion, as shown in Chapter 4. The ‘main emphases’, also continuously expressed by Undén and others, were neutrality and impartiality. Impartiality, as noted above, was a fundamental idea of the peacekeeping concept and an echo of the UN charter’s clear prohibition of any power interfering in another state’s internal affairs.<sup>572</sup> Even though being predominantly a political principle, the ‘non-interference’ norm naturally, at least in rhetoric, needed to be upheld by those working in the field.

Besides the principle of ‘open fire only in self-defence’, the core values of the peacekeepers were actually handed to them in the manual discussed in Chapter 4 (see also Image 3 therein). There the soldiers were urged to have ‘high ethical standards’ and ‘good judgement’ alongside an independent mindset and substantial integrity. They were further expected to have an ‘understanding’ of the situation in which they worked. It could be argued that this might well correlate with the Homeland Defender’s core value of being ‘as similar to civil society as possible’. The argument would then be that the assumed core values of a Swedish Homeland Defender likewise were ‘high ethical standards, good judgement, understanding and confidence’. Yet it is important to remember the relation between the ‘overall purpose’ and the ‘core values’ in the ideal models. Consequently, what are ‘good judgement’ or ‘understanding’ in regard to protecting the homeland are arguably something different from those core values in regard to keeping someone else’s peace or protecting someone else’s civilians.

Finally, in Haaland’s model, civilian control – very similar to the Homeland Defenders – is achieved by the process of recruitment and education, since the Swedish UN battalions were formed in the context of the Swedish army structure. However, the transfer of operational command to the UN also meant that the civilian control to some extent was achieved by what Haaland calls ‘surveillance’. This means that public opinion through moral judgements, on how the troops were used and how they behaved, had some control. Swedish soldiers and commanders knew (or at least soon became aware) that they would have to answer to the Swedish public when returning

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<sup>572</sup> UN Charter 2(4): ‘All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.’

to Sweden. Most indicative of this civilian control is perhaps Wærn's request to be transferred from Elizabethville in early 1962, stating that one of his motives was to get away from journalists. As seen, *Djungeltelegrafen* also complained that 'every little mistake was scrutinized with a magnifying glass.'<sup>573</sup> Finally, and similar to the role model of the Mercenary, control was also achieved by actual contracts between the soldiers and the army and between the UN and Sweden.

Table 4. A Peacekeeping Role Model

	Warrior	Swedish Homeland Defender	Swedish 1960 Peacekeeper
<b>Overall purpose</b>	Fight wars	Protect the homeland	Keep the peace, protect civilians (defend the mission)
<b>Main emphasis</b>	Professionalism	Representativeness and democracy	Neutrality, impartiality and defensiveness
<b>Core values</b>	Honour, duty, cohesion, loyalty	As similar to civil society as possible	High ethical standards, good judgement, understanding, independence, confidence, open fire only in self-defence
<b>Civilian control achieved by</b>	Surveillance and obedience	Recruitment and education	Recruitment, surveillance and contracts*

\* Notably, UN soldiers answer to both an international and domestic civilian public.

In Table 3 above, the ideal role model of the Swedish 1960 peacekeeper has been examined alongside Haaland's role models of the Warrior and the Homeland Defender. Of course, no perfect role model exists in reality or

<sup>573</sup> *Djungeltelegrafen*, nr. 6, XIVK, no date, 1962, p. 5; see Chapter 8.

could be said to correlate with all individual soldiers' perspectives and motives for serving. The constellations of ideal role models here should rather be treated as a tool to highlight why and when the misunderstandings occur, and thereby when 'disorder' is brought to the trinitarian understanding of the Swedish context.

Throughout this study I have maintained that the Swedish government held on to the values, purposes and emphases included in the peacekeeper role model. Even at times of fierce combat in Elizabethville, Swedish officials refused to acknowledge a state of war or in any way view the UN course of action as anything but defensive. Clinging firmly to the overall purpose of keeping the peace and protecting the suffering Congolese people, while viewing the ONUC in a larger political context and from a distance, all 'main emphases' and 'core values' could be argued to be in place. In 1960 this was done with little effort, since the repelling of Baluba attacks on the train escorts were clearly defensive actions. Also, the Baluba attackers had no real political support in Europe and the unfortunate killing of them did not create much, if any, resentment in Europe, including Sweden. The government refrained from commenting in detail.

During September and again in December, the government's position became harder to defend. Pressure on the government started to increase internationally and soon also domestically. While the consensus within the government continued to be strong, external opposition was heard. In order to reaffirm its position, the government had to elevate the debate away from the actual events even further and continued to maintain the overall purposes of the mission. In a way it can be argued that another overall purpose – 'the defence of the mission' or in the longer run the 'defence of the United Nations' – was added. The government was also explicit about what it saw as the causes of the conflicts in 1961, blaming the foreign mercenaries for trying to prevent the UN fulfilling its purpose. If there were any enemies to find in Katanga, these were the mercenaries. The government's position throughout the ONUC operation is not hard to understand. There simply did not exist any alternatives, and to not continue with the rhetoric used when deciding to participate in the first place would define the government as weak, lacking control of the situation, and disloyal to the UN.

Still, for the Swedish battalions in the Congo, the government's adherence to the peacekeeper role model was problematic, especially during and after the military engagements in 1961. Although limited in space and duration, the conditions in which the soldiers worked, especially in December 1961 but also in September 1961 and again in December 1962, for themselves constituted warfare. As they became involved in combat, killed and were killed, the values, emphases and purposes of the peacekeeping role model became distant. Neither could the role model of the Homeland Defender be invoked. It was rather the 'Warriors' core values of 'duty' and 'loyalty' that were given precedence in the rhetoric of the battalions. Likewise – and similar to the Warrior role model in Haaland's scheme – soldier professionalism was viewed as admirable. The Swedes compared themselves with professional soldiers from other contributing countries and found themselves to rank higher in military competence. Just as for the governmental node of analysis, the battalions could do little else. Since the overall purpose of keeping the peace obviously had failed miserably at times, something else was needed to uphold the collective feeling of purposefulness. The overall purpose of the Homeland Defender could naturally not be used since the homeland obviously was not under attack. Hence the battalion was left with soldiering in itself as a source for pride and self-fulfilment. For the equation to work, the presence of a 'state of war', even if limited in space and time, was necessary in order to be able to celebrate the values of a warrior in combat.

Between the two conflicting descriptions of what took place in the Congo stood the newspapers. Initially they were as united as anyone else in the righteousness of sending Swedish soldiers to the Congo. During the first combat in 1960 they even celebrated the Swedish soldiers' efficiency and bravery in mowing down attacking Baluba with machine guns. In 1961 the press noted the growing criticism from international media as the ONUC became more offensive in its military activity. Unlike the government, the UN or the battalions, the press could discuss the situation in the Congo from a perspective of the possible failure of the operation. Obviously, the ideals of peacekeeping at times were not upheld. This in turn spurred a debate on whether it was legitimate, both legally and ethically, for peacekeepers to fight wars. Soon the debate became ideologically coloured, primarily based on who was considered to be the enemy. The right-wing press maintained that the UN with its enterprise bordered on imperialism in

Katanga, and was thereby violating its own principles. The left-wing media, on the other hand, came out as strong supporters of the operation, arguing that the UN actually was throwing out the old imperialists from the Congo. The media coverage from the Congo in 1961 also painted an image of the cruelty of war, the killing and suffering. The reports from the chaotic scenes of combat and of killed and wounded Swedish soldiers expressed a general sense of confusion and panic in the Congo; something that in turn did not correlate well with the battalions' view of themselves as professional soldiers in control of the situation. A certain amount of Katangan misinformation was also published in the press. This further added to the disloyalty the battalions at times felt the media displayed.

In the end the trinity held together, to some extent due to the fact that the Swedish battalions were moved to Kamina and away from the immediate tension and critical eyes of the journalists. More important at this stage was the solid political party consensus between left and right in Sweden. Even though the government did not acknowledge any 'heroic Swedish warriors fighting and winning a war in the Congo', its unity and consistent rhetoric had a hampering effect on the domestic critics' ability to grow stronger and make use of the press to state their views. Undén at times explicitly celebrated the Swedish soldiers' devotion and loyalty to the cause of peace and also dismissed accusations of misconduct.

### *The 'cultural foundation' and the collective battalion self-perception*

In Chapters 2 and 4 it was argued that the battalions were recruited and formed within the structure and context of the army in the 1960s, or in other words: as Homeland Defenders. It was shown that civil society and the army shared a 'cultural foundation'. Philip Smith argued that any military enterprise needed to be firmly anchored to the cultural foundation for it to be appreciated and viewed as righteous by the 'home' society at large. Likewise, Sanimir Resic argued that every culture has its 'own way of war'. Analytically, the cultural foundation has been treated as a sort of glue that held the trinity in order.

The Swedish cultural foundation was rooted in a sense of 'splendid isolation', as will be recalled from Chapter 2. Sweden was portrayed as unique in its altruistic approach to the Third World and the former



colonies. While all other Western and Eastern countries were believed to more or less act according to hidden agendas serving their national interests, Sweden was believed to be far more genuine in its support of humanitarian goals. To further reinforce this claim, Sweden's non-colonial history, long-lasting peace and non-alignment in the Cold War were imparted. Sweden's active foreign policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s was therefore characterized by a sense of moral superiority in matters of how a society should be organized. From such a position it was obvious that if the 'Swedish Model' somehow could be exported to other societies, or at least stand out as an attractive role model for others to follow, the world would be a better place. Yet Sweden had neither the political power nor ambition to impose the 'Swedish Model' on any nation, since this would equate to imperialism. Instead, the UN became the natural platform from which to support and promote equality, altruism, human rights, peace and anti-colonialism. Consequently, when the UN called for assistance in the form of troops to be sent to the Congo, a Swedish failure to contribute would have been viewed as betraying an ally and contradicting the nation's own ideals.

In a way the Swedish soldiers were therefore sent to the Congo carrying an extension of the lofty ideals of the cultural foundation. In other words: they were supposed to contribute to the Swedish notion of 'fostering' and assistance to a newly independent member of the Third World by being the best peacekeepers in the world. Here lies another cause of misunderstanding between the nodes in the trinity. Sweden as a peacekeeper is something different from a Swedish peacekeeping battalion. Sweden 'the peacekeeper' was supposed to be part of the overall solution to the Congo crisis, being aware that the goal of the operation was somewhat unclear and not knowing when the operation was going to end. The battalions, on the other hand, had a clear end in sight; a factual date when they would return to Sweden. Hence their scope, motives and goals were far more limited. While this division might seem petty, it still generated different definitions of success. For the battalions, when summarizing their tours of duty in the Congo, success meant that the battalions, to the best of their ability, had completed the tasks that had been handed to them by the UN Force Commander and civilian administration. Even though the battalions praised themselves for a job well done, they were still part of what often was described as a UN failure in the Congo.

The battalions built their collective self-perception on many things. Naturally, there were several unifying themes to build on. First and foremost their members were all Swedes. Besides obvious attributes such as language and uniforms, they collectively shared the Swedish cultural foundation. For them it meant that they represented a nation without sins in Africa. No one could accuse the Swedes of being sent by a former colonial power or as carrying with them any hidden agenda. With that self-image followed, of course, an enormous responsibility to uphold the perceived splendid reputation of Sweden. Kjellgren in particular made this point. A single act of irresponsible behaviour could severely damage the reputation of Sweden, he argued. Whether he actually believed this or just used it to enforce the discipline of the unit is secondary to the fact that it shows how a Swedish self-interest was used to motivate the soldiers. In other words: what they did in the Congo they also to some extent did for Sweden.

A second identity marker was the UN and the cause of peace. This cause united all peacekeepers in the Congo in their effort to stop the violence and achieve peace. To be primarily UN soldiers could be problematic. A UN collective self-perception made the Swedish soldiers part of the 'ONUC army' in a way that would make them share criticism of non-Swedish UN units. Since the Swedish battalions considered themselves to be of a higher standard than other UN contingents, this was not always welcomed. On the other hand, it also worked in the opposite direction. For example, when the Swedish battalions' actions were criticized from the perspective of them being Swedish rather than UN soldiers, this would stir irritation in *Djungeltelegrafen*. It was then considered unfair that the Swedes were assessed according to a different yardstick than that applied to soldiers from other countries. It was a claim that, of course, can be noted as inconsistent with their use of Swedishness as something good and unique.

In the combat situations, the defence of Sweden's reputation or the high ideals of the UN cause of peace were, however, insufficient to make men risk their lives on the streets of Elizabethville. Combat motivation is something different than soldier motivation. The first refers to the notion of 'courage under fire' while the latter refers to the motive for enlisting. As in the case of most wars, combat motivation was driven mainly by protection of the primary group, the battalion itself. Peer pressure and the protection of one's 'brothers in arms' was the main driving force during combat. A third and significant collective identity construction was therefore their common

occupation of soldier. By simply identifying themselves as soldiers, the battalions could include both peacekeeping and war-fighting in their collective self-perception. Also, they could exclude any greater political responsibility or mission of 'fostering'.

It was, nevertheless, the soldiers of the Swedish battalions who faced the realities in the field, not the news media or the government. It was the battalions which had the first-hand confrontation with Africa. I have shown that this meeting with the Congo was very complex. On the one hand, for many soldiers and for the battalion collectively, the violence and suffering in the Congo substantiated and proved the notion of Sweden's cultural superiority. A frequent and systematic rhetoric portraying Sweden, Swedish society and history as a role model for African society and development was used internally. It categorized the Congo and its inhabitants as primitive, infantile and irrational. The message was clear: you could not trust the Congolese to stand by their words or even tell the truth about anything much. *Djungeltelegrafen* was not slow to blame former Western colonialists and profiteers for being responsible for the situation in the Congo and its 'underdevelopment', but in reality this did little to weaken the condescending way in which the Congo was depicted. It was nothing short of cultural racism, and at times *Djungeltelegrafen* even made fun of the indigenous population.

On the other hand, to exclusively view the meeting with the Congo this way does not capture the whole story. Parallel to the theme of cultural superiority, and not necessarily in contradiction, was an attempt to rationally explain the situation in a way that went beyond general stereotypes of 'jungle warriors', 'primitive natives' or 'corrupted politicians'. It was the battalion which referred to the Baluba jungle warriors as having logical reasons for fearing what could happen to them. It was *Djungeltelegrafen*, not *Aftonbladet* or Erlander, which compared the rebelling Baluba youth to the logic of other such youth movements around the world, and thereby at least once elevated them from their status as 'primitive and irrational jungle warriors.' Likewise, it was the battalion which, in order to remain in control, had to categorize people as criminals, enemies, friends or victims regardless of whether they were, for example, Baluba or Belgians.

In sum, both aspects of these categorizations were at work. For instance, to strike down hard on the troublesome Baluba jeunesse in or outside the

refugee camp in 1961–1962 can therefore be seen as an expression of both condescending racism and rightful police work on behalf of the other refugees.

The ONUC came to a close in the summer of 1964. In 1960 the UN mission had been about order and stability and assistance to the Congo. In 1964 the UN had defeated the secessionist province of Katanga in order to uphold the authority of the legitimate government in Leopoldville and to prevent an otherwise certain civil war. After the defeat of the gendarmerie in 1963, the UN and its participating member states saw an opportunity to argue that the mandate had been fulfilled, which made it politically possible to withdraw from the country.<sup>574</sup>

The 22nd Battalion was the last Swedish battalion to leave the Congo, in the spring of 1964. The intervention in Cyprus had by then become the new main focus point for Swedish peacekeepers. The Congo participation left many unanswered questions, and the legacy of the Congo has at times reappeared in the Swedish debate.<sup>575</sup> The media debate in the autumn of 1961 and throughout 1962 about the legitimacy of the UN course of action was left unresolved. As discussed in Chapter 8, the Department of Foreign Affairs was very pleased to be able to pull out of the Congo, and it is unlikely that the government had any interest in further investigations or evaluations of its participation in the ONUC. For the battalions, perhaps especially so for the members of the 12th and 14th Battalions, the unfinished debate created a feeling of betrayal. By not receiving recognition for the work they had done – or as Wærn put it, the heroism they had displayed – many soldiers felt unappreciated.

It was the factual events in the Congo that shattered the ideal image of the peacekeeping mission, turning it into something else. Without agreement on what this ‘else’ was, what happened in the Congo had to be explained in terms of failed peacekeeping. War-fighting had its own descriptions of

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<sup>574</sup> The situation in Katanga were at the time of the Swedish withdrawal was, according to Lt. Col. Tham ‘unstable’. See Kongorapport nr. 29, XXIIK, 5/5/1964, p. 1.

<sup>575</sup> For instance, two articles in the men’s magazine *FIB-Aktuellt* in 1972 compared the 12th Battalion’s confrontations with the Baluba jeunesse in 1961 with the Song My massacre in 1968; see Claes J.B. Löfgren (1990), pp. 253–261.

success, and could not by definition live up to the 'high moral standards' of a peacekeeping enterprise. Reports of war in the Congo were, therefore, by the 'home front' met with confusion followed by mistrust and growing opposition. Perhaps the best way to summarize this would be to again quote *Bohuslänningen* from 1961:

[T]he suggestion that ... the attitudes vis-à-vis the native inhabitants have become more hardened, could be a symptom of the foundation for the peace mission being corroded under the pressure from the events. It is of importance that our efforts are supported by high moral standards and of a home opinion convinced of the rightness of the cause.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Quotation from *Bohuslänningen*, in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2/12/1961.

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**Kongorapporter (Congo reports) by number**

Some of the Congo reports can be found in several archives. Those listed here are the archives used by the author. Note that not all reports have been used in this study.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>Archive</b>
<b>BAT10</b>			
1.	15/12/1960	From deployment to 15/12 1960	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
2.	21/1/1961	16/12/1960-21/1/1961	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
3.	27/2/1961	22/1-27/2 1961	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
4.	10/4/1961	Report of the latest events	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
5.	30/4/1961	28/2-30/4 1961	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
6.	31/5/1961	1/5-31/5 1961	KrA/BATX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
<b>BAT12</b>			
1.	30/6/1961	1/6-30/6 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
2.	31/7/1961	1/7-31/7 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
3.	31/8/1961	1/8-31/8 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
4.	30/9/1961	1/9-30/9 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
5.	31/10/1961	1/10-31/10 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
6.	30/11/1961	1/11-30/11 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
<b>BAT14</b>			
1.	31/12/1961	1/12-31/12 1961	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
2.	31/1/1962	1/1-31/1 1962	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
3.	28/2/1962	1/2-28/2 1962	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
4.	31/3/1962	1/3-31/3 1962	KrA/BATXVI/Sekt. 1B, Vol. B3
5.	30/4 1962	1/4-30/4 1962	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
<b>BAT16</b>			
6.	31/5/1962	1/5-31/5 1962	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
7.	30/6/1962	1/6-30/6 1962	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
8.	31/7/1962	1/7-31/7 1962	KrA/BATXVI/Sekt. 1, Vol. F5
9.	31/8/1962	1/8-31/8 1962	KrA/BATXVI/Sekt. 1, Vol. F5
10.	30/9/1962	1/9-30/9 1962	KrA/BATXVI/Sekt. 1, Vol. F5
<b>BAT18</b>			
11.	17/11/1962	11/10-31/10 1962	KrA/BATXVIII/Sekt. 1, Vol. F1
12.	10/12/1962	November 62	KrA/Ast/FN Avd./Serie F4, Vol. 2*
13.	10/1/1963	December 62	UD/HP48:Kongo 22/1/1963
14.	6/2/1963	January 63	KrA/BATXVIII/Sekt. 1, Vol. F1
15.	13/3/1963	February 63	KrA/BATXVIII/Sekt. 1, Vol. F1
16.	20/4/1963	March 63	KrA/BATXVIII/Sekt. 1, Vol. F1
<b>BAT20</b>			
17.	20/5/1963	Apri 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
18.	13/6/1963	May 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7

19.	15/7/1963	June 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
20.	15/8/1963	July 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
21.	12/9/1963	August 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
22.	12/10/1963	September 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
23.	15/11/1963	October 63	KrA/BATXX/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F7
24.	Not found		
BAT22			
25.	13/1/1964	December 63	KrA/BATXXII/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F2
26.	6/2/1964	January 64	KrA/BATXXII/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F2
27.	12/3/1964	February 64	KrA/BATXXII/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F2
28.	10/4/1964	March 64	KrA/BATXXII/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F2
29.	5/5/1964	April 64	KrA/BATXXII/Sekt. 1B, Vol. F2

\* Not available through FBS

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# Summary in Swedish

I samband med Kongos självständighet från Belgien 1960 genomförde FN en av sina största fredsbevarande insatser någonsin, *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo*, ONUC. Syftet var att förhindra att det nya landet skulle hamna i ett omfattande inbördeskrig. Sverige var ett av de länder som bidrog med militär personal och sände totalt sju bataljoner till Kongo under perioden 1960 till 1964. De svenska bataljonerna var huvudsakligen verksamma i provinsen Katanga, som under ledning av Moïse Tshombe och mot centralregeringens vilja utropat sin självständighet från Kongo 1960.

FN:s närvaro i Katanga betraktades periodvis som fientlig ockupation och i september och december 1961 samt kring årsskiftet 1962/63 eskalerade spänningarna till väpnade konfrontationer mellan FN och provinsregeringens styrkor. I dessa drabbningar deltog även de svenska bataljonerna. Konflikterna i Kongo blev inte bara en stressande upplevelse för dem som deltog, utan även ett drama som följdes intensivt av svensk media och den svenska regeringen. Skeendena i Kongo var inte för någon aktör det som hade förväntats av en fredsbevarande insats.

Den här studien undersöker den samtida svenska erfarenheten av ONUC 1960-1964. Studien tar sin utgångspunkt i hypotesen att händelserna i Kongo kom att tolkas, förstås och berättas på olika sätt beroende på vilken aktör som reflekterade över dem. Den teoretiska ansatsen hämtas från Carl von Clausewitz och hans förståelse av krigets treenighet. Clausewitz hävdade att kriget måste förstås som en aktivitet som involverar folket, den politiska makten och militären. För att kriget skall kunna vara genomförbart krävs folkets stöd, den politiska maktens klara motiv och att militären accepterar uppgiften att strida.

Inspirerad av Clausewitz undersöker den här studien de tre empiriska kategorierna svensk press, svensk politisk retorik samt innehållet i de svenska kongobataljonernas rapporter och fälttidning. Syftet med undersökningen är att se hur dessa tre aktörer berättar, förstår och tolkar händelserna i Kongo och hur denna förståelse sätts i relation till diffusa dikotomier som krig-fred, civil-militär och nationell-internationell. Olika förståelser av samma

händelse tenderar att skapa "disharmoni" i treenigheten och därmed underminera samförståndet kring insatsen.

För att kontextualisera studien undersöks även det svenska samhällets självförståelse under det tidiga 60-talet. Här framträder en självbild av Sverige som en unik och i många fall överlägsen samhällsorganisation i relation till övriga världen. 1960-talet har betecknats som en höjdpunkt för vad Rune Johansson har kallat "välfärdsnationalism". Sverige var inte bara välmående, rikt, modernt och demokratiskt. Detta hade, enligt myten, även uppnåtts genom samförstånd och kompromisser under Sveriges tidiga 1900-tal. Tage Erlander deklarerade i riksdagen att världen sannolikt kunde bli en bättre plats om den svenska modellen kunde exporteras utom rikets gränser.

Avsaknaden av ett kolonialt arv i modern tid, undvikandet av inblandning i något av de två världskrigen samt alliansfriheten under kalla kriget gjorde att Sverige ansåg sig ha en unik internationell position som medlare och konfliktlösare. Detta tog sig bland annat uttryck i ett starkt stöd till FN. När FN efterfrågade svensk trupp till Kongo var beslutet därför lätt att ta. De politiska partierna var eniga i sitt stöd, likaså svensk media. Det var inte heller några problem att finna frivilliga soldater att sända till Kongo.

I slutet av 1960 och början av 1961 blev delar av den svenska bataljonen angripna under sitt uppdrag att eskortera tågtrafik genom Katanga. Angripna var medlemmar ur Balubastammens ungdomsrörelse, de så kallade *jeunesse*. De utrustningsmässigt vida överlägsna svenska soldaterna slog tillbaka anfallen utan större bekymmer. I Sverige fick händelserna stort nyhetsutrymme och med hjälp av ett rikt bildmaterial beskrevs händelserna i dramatiska termer. I regel förhöll sig den svenska pressen mycket positiv till soldaternas agerande vilket kan förklaras utifrån stridens defensiva karaktär samt Balubastammens politiska insignifikans i världspolitiken. I stället beskrevs modet, disciplinen och effektiviteten hos soldaterna i berömmande ordalag. Även bataljonen prisade sin egen insats utifrån dessa kriterier.

Under andra hälften av 1961 förändrades emellertid det politiska landskapet. Tshombe uttryckte vid flera tillfällen sitt ogillande av FN:s aktivitet i Katanga och hade nu, med hjälp av inhyrda europeiska legosoldater, mönstrat en egen armé, ett gendarmeri. I ett försök att omhänderta och avvärja legosoldaterna utbröt våldsamheter mellan FN:s trupper och gendarmeriet i provinshuvudstaden Elizabethville hösten 1961. Under stridigheterna stupade och sårades många, inklusive svenska soldater.

Samtidigt hade Katangakonflikten dragits in i kalla krigets retorik och världssopinionen var delad. Från de gamla europeiska kolonialmakterna, i synnerhet Belgien, Storbritannien och Frankrike, kom skarp kritik mot FN:s agerande i Katanga. Studien visar att den externa kritiken av FN:s insats kom att ta stor plats i det svenska mediala landskapet. Svenska tidningar lyfte sin tidigare fokus från hur soldaterna genomförde sitt uppdrag och koncentrerade sig i stället alltmer på att diskutera FN:s roll i Kongo. De militära operationerna i september och december 1961 anklagades i internationell press för att vara direkta inblandningar i en annan stats interna angelägenheter och därmed stridande mot FN:s egen stadga. I Sverige uttryckte i synnerhet konservativa *Svenska Dagbladet* under 1962 misstänksamhet mot FN:s aktioner i Katanga, som tidningen inte drog sig för att likna vid imperialism. Vänstertidningar med *Aftonbladet* i spetsen ställde sig på andra sidan i debatten och blev ivriga förespråkare för insatsen, som de menade hade just syftet att slänga ut europeiska imperialister ur Kongo. Oavsett förhållningssätt så kom den svenska pressens dramatiserade beskrivningar av kriget i Kongo att förmedla en bild av misslyckad peacekeeping, vilket mottogs av besvikelse av bataljonerna i fält. Studien visar att kriget för dem, även om det inte var önskat, snarare var ett begreppsligt ramverk som kunde förklara och legitimera de våldshandlingar som de tvingades göra i Kongo. Prestationen under krig, något som bataljonerna i sig ansåg vara något som förtjänade beröm, kom således av media att inkorporeras och mer eller mindre försvinna i den större bilden av ett misslyckande i Kongo. Detta i sin tur blev problematiskt för bataljonernas självbild.

Den svenska regeringen och riksdagen behöll under hela ONUC konsensus om insatsen, även om debatterna under 1961 och 1962 kom att handla om lojalitet gentemot FN snarare än om vad som försiggick i Kongo. Ingen svensk politiker kunde anamma en krigsretorik då det hade inneburit ett politiskt medgivande av ONUC som misslyckat. Som svar på internationell kritik hävdade regeringen vid upprepade tillfällen att de svenska bataljonerna i första hand var ONUC-bataljoner och inte svenska. Syftet var att understryka att det var FN som bar ansvaret för hur bataljonerna nyttjades i Kongo. Samtidigt som detta kan sägas vara korrekt i bemärkelsen att Sverige inte hade något större operationellt inflytande, innebar det även i praktiken att den svenska politiska makten tvingades distansera sig från sina nationella förband i krig. Sammanfattningsvis visar undersökningen att treenighetens

nader, media, regering och militär, på detta sätt diskuterade, tolkade och fokuserade på olika aspekter och nivåer av händelserna i Katanga, vilket under 1961 och 1962 utmanade den konsensus som tidigare funnits om insatsen.

Till stor del på grund av den mediala bevakningen begärde och beviljades den svenska bataljonen förflyttning från Elizabethville i april 1962. Avsaknaden av väpnad konflikt under större delen av 1962 fick en lugnande inverkan på den inbördes relationen mellan noderna i treenigheten, även om den svenska bataljonen fann sysslolösheten moralsänkande. En politisk lösning verkade däremot fortfarande fjärran och i slutet på 1962 hade den svenska höger- och vänsterpressen positionerat sig i var sitt läger. FN:s slutoffensiv kring årsskiftet 1962/63 gjorde effektivt slut på Katangas möjligheter till självständighet och synliggjorde därmed även ett slutmål för operationen. Svenska UD jobbade från 1963 med att så politiskt smidigt som möjligt få de svenska bataljonerna att lämna Kongo. I samband med att ONUC avvecklades 1964 lämnade den sista svenska bataljonen landet.

Studien undersöker också närmare, genom fälttidningen *Djungeltelegrafen*, hur de svenska bataljonerna uppfattade sig själva och sin roll som svenskar och fredsbevarare i Kongo. I tidningen framträder tydligt en självbild av Sverige som ett föredöme i fråga om modernitet och samhällsstruktur, en bild som har drag av en sorts kulturell rasism liknande "den vite mannens börda". Skarp kritik riktades mot den forna kolonialmakten Belgien som ansågs ha orättfärdigt profiterat på landet och på så vis till stor del också var ansvarigt för den politiska krisen. Kongo sågs som ett land med potential att bli ett rikt och demokratiskt samhälle så länge landet kunde enas kring målinriktad modernisering och demokratisk utveckling, med västerlandet som förebild.

Studien avslutas med konstaterandet att den fredsbevarande insatsen i Kongo ställde Sverige inför en rad problem när den övergick i väpnad konflikt. När insatsen bytte skepnad kunde militären omdefiniera sina roller, mål och syften, något massmedia hade svårare att göra. Den politiska noden i treenigheten förhöll sig retoriskt distanserad men kunde, tack vare den partipolitiska konsensus som fanns, förhindra att stödet för insatsen helt kollapsade.

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