

NMML in Intellectual Engagement Overseas

“The Cold War and the Postcolonial Moment – Prehistory, Aims and Achievements of the Non-Aligned Movement 50 years after Belgrade”

An international conference on “The Cold War and the Postcolonial Moment - Prehistory, Aims and Achievements of the Non-Aligned Movement 50 years after Belgrade” was hosted in Zurich on 3-4 June 2011 by University of Zurich and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, in collaboration with the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

In pursuit of its core competence in the sphere of academic activities and intellectual engagement with international and national scholars and specialized institutions, NMML collaborated in this major international conference held in Zurich, by sponsoring the participation of a distinguished Indian delegation comprised of Director, NMML Prof. Mridula Mukherjee and two retired senior diplomats Ambassador Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, who spoke on “India’s Relations with the Commonwealth and its Influence on Foreign Policy” and Ambassador Rajiv Sikri, who participated in the Round Table discussions.

The first conference of non-aligned nations took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in September 1961. The idea behind the meeting was not new to many of the assembled delegates. Freedom activists from the European colonies in Asia, Africa, and South America had been discussing issues such as resistance against imperialism and peaceful co-existence for decades already, often together with pacifist and socialist intellectuals from Europe. They had gathered in Brussels in February 1927 in a conference of the League against Imperialism, and then in Bandung in April 1955. There, the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa attempted to organize themselves as the joint voice of the Third World, an illusion which almost instantly dissolved.

For Tito’s Yugoslavia, non-alignment became a matter of survival after its break with the Soviet Union and its refusal to join the NATO pact. Tito was quick to pick up the idea of peaceful co-existence and to wrap it into a new ideology. The special relationship developing between Tito, Nehru and Nasser, after the Brioni Meeting of 1956, enabled Tito to host the Belgrade Conference of 1961. The new Movement of non-aligned states, united until today by minimal common goals and administration,

was finally successful in offering the countries of Asia, Africa and South America a platform to speak together as one voice in forums such as the United Nations.

This international conference in Zurich remembered Belgrade 1961 by looking back at the ideological beginnings of the NAM in the times of the freedom movements and the founding of post-colonial states, examining the influence of its intellectual and political leaders, analyzing Yugoslavia's role in the Movement and discussing NAM's function after the end of the Cold War, uniting senior and junior researchers and professionals from area studies, world history, political sciences and diplomacy.

The Keynote Speakers on 3 June were Prof. Dr. Dietmar Rothermund, Heidelberg and Mr Budimir Loncar, former Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Zagreb who spoke on "The Era of Non-Alignment".

Prof. Mridula Mukherjee, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi presented a paper on "Nehru and the Non-Aligned Movement: Some Reflections" at a panel discussion on "Who invented Non-Alignment" held in the first session.

A Round Table Discussion on 'The Non-Aligned Movement after 1989' was held on 4 June, chaired by Dr. Bernard Imhasly, former correspondent of Neue Zürcher Zeitung in Mumbai with speakers Mr Budimir Loncar from Zagreb; Ambassador Rajiv Sikri; Prof. Dr. Ivan Ivekovic from Cairo and Dr. Claude Altermatt from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Berne.

Dr. Natasha Miskovic, Department for Eastern European History, University of Zurich, who presented a paper on "Belgrade and the First Summit of the Non-Aligned" coordinated this international conference.

Other sponsors of the conference were the Swiss Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Swiss National Science Foundation; North-South Centre ETHZ; Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences; Hochschulstiftung UZH and Zürcher Universitätsverein ZUNIV.

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in collaboration with the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

International Conference, 3 to 4 June 2011

Admission free

The Cold War and the Postcolonial Moment

Prehistory, Aims and Achievements
of the Non-Aligned Movement,
50 Years after Belgrade

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