

Time not on the side of waffling by the Non-Aligned Movement

by Hartmut Cramer and Mary Burdman

The meeting of the foreign ministers of 15 countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held Feb. 12-13 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, was convened on short notice in the midst of the escalating Persian Gulf war. At issue was not merely where NAM stands vis-à-vis a war allegedly being fought between two of its member countries—Iraq and Kuwait—but also, the future prospects of NAM as a political movement for development.

NAM was founded in 1955 by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other Third World leaders, as a new institution committed to ending the evil of colonialism and establishing what later on became known as a just new world economic order.

Based on the official declarations and the concrete steps which were announced, the results of the Belgrade meeting would seem scanty, if not meaningless. Both the opening and closing statements of the chairman, Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister Loncar, ignored the real issue—the desperate drive of the bankrupt Anglo-American establishment to use this war in order to control the developing sector (and other parts of the world as well) through a "new world order"—and instead focused on the narrow issue of "Iraq's aggression against Kuwait." Loncar even didn't mention the fact that the conduct of the war so far demonstrates that the mandate given by the U.N. Security Council "to free Kuwait by other means" has already been exceeded, as some Arab delegations stressed.

Loncar's view undoubtedly was shared by the Egyptian delegation, and had the sympathy of the representatives of Venezuela and Argentina, but it was by no means the only one expressed. Rather, it reflected the inevitable results of a wishy-washy policy of "consensus," as opposed to a clear one of "truth-seeking." There is also the question of the sheer bullying tactics applied by the Bush administration, above all the threat to withhold credit, exerted through the International Monetary Fund. An IMF delegation had left Yugoslavia just one day before the NAM conference, after a week of the economic protection racket which the IMF calls "negotiations."

Some members resisted those political and economic pressures, as the interviews below indicate. In addition, the delegations of Iran, Algeria, and Palestine (present as an observer) appealed for NAM not only to push for an immediate cease-fire in the Gulf and to prevent the complete destruction of Iraq, but to more vigorously seek a political solution of all the problems in the region, including the "Palestinian

question," which is surely the key to a durable peace in the entire "Middle East" region—which NAM correctly calls West Asia.

What happened in Belgrade?

What happened behind the closed doors of the Federal Palace in Yugoslavia's capital, the site of this NAM ministerial meeting, can only be guessed at by extrapolating from public and private statements, since the press was denied access, and official information was close to nil. "We will try to formulate a resolution which is also acceptable to the Iraqi side," said one Asian diplomat the night before the discussions of the senior officials started on Monday, Feb. 11. "Apart from the unspeakable damage done to the people and civilian population in Iraq so far, the consequences of this war for our economies are so bad, that we have to do everything to stop it as quickly as possible," he added. He went on to admit that it is quite well understood in the developing sector, that this war is ultimately directed against the entire Third World.

A proposal for an "acceptable" NAM resolution, which apparently had been drafted by the Indian delegation, was discussed among the senior officials on Feb. 11, who reportedly also agreed on a resolution to be finalized and decided upon by their ministers the next day. But at this meeting, no final text could be agreed upon. According to diplomatic sources participating in the conference, after the chairman's opening statement, which, as mentioned above, clearly reflected pressures from outside NAM, "all participants agreed, that it is impossible for NAM to present a peace plan," but that "the dialogue to reach a peaceful solution has to be kept alive." There was also, a diplomat said, "strong emphasis of the fear of the escalation of this war," and the "fear that chemical and nuclear weapons might be used." The high toll of civilian casualties was stressed, as well as the fear, that "this war will negatively affect the long-term interests of the entire Third World, and not just this region."

What this means was made explicit "by some ministers," as a source put it: that the Gulf war is getting out of control, that its strategic dimensions have to be taken into consideration, that the "other issues of the region, especially the Palestinian question, have to be solved," and, last, but not least, that "the U.N. doesn't do much about it."

The Algerian delegation was among the most outspoken on

the U.N.'s failure. This Arab country already publicly had criticized the fact, that "the Gulf war is already exceeding the U.N. mandate," a criticism also raised by Indian Foreign Minister Vidyacharan Shukla, who told *EIR* in Belgrade, that the phrase "other means" in the last U.N. resolution, "could not mean the destruction of civilian property or huge amounts of civilians: women, children, old people, and helpless people."

During the morning session of the ministerial meeting on Feb. 13, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati gave a briefing on the perspectives of his country's peace plan, which, according to him, had been answered constructively by Baghdad. "The thought of peace is still alive," concluded Velayati, who now represents the key country in the Gulf region, and who reportedly played a pivotal role in Belgrade. Although Iran is "neutral" in this war; the Iranian foreign minister made it nevertheless clear that his government will not tolerate the destruction of Iraq as a nation. Unfortunately, Velayati canceled a press conference that evening, where a first-hand report might have been given, in order to leave for further peace talks in Geneva.

One week later, Iran invited the governments of "certain non-aligned countries" (India and Yugoslavia) to discussions in Teheran.

Most probably the following was what happened in Belgrade: Given the fact that NAM abides by the policy of "consensus," and since the Anglo-Americans were blackmailing more than one participant, the choice was either a watered-down, worse than useless "official resolution," or no final declaration at all, with more "informal" and "concrete" actions to come, coordinated by its Bureau. NAM opted for the latter. The official outcome, announced by Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister Loncar to the press late in the evening, was that "delegations of some non-aligned countries will go to the respective capitals" in order to try to stop the war. Loncar had to be asked more than once, that this would "also include Washington."

Peace through development

But if the governments in Washington and London conclude from the outcome of this meeting that they have sewn up the non-aligned, as U.S. President Bush implies with his frequent assertion that "the rest of the world" is behind him, they are mistaken. The developing countries' much publicized insistence, that "no country has the right to aggression against another," is not only meant in respect to Iraq and Kuwait's dispute, but above all reflects their fear that they could be the next to be militarily destroyed by the Anglo-Americans if they don't obey now.

As each day passes, the pressure of reality threatens to exceed the pressures to which certain non-aligned governments are being subjected by the Anglo-Americans.

Only a few of the Third World leaders have any illusions about the consequences of this war; and almost nobody is fooled by Bush's "new world order." The instruments being used to bring this order into being—NATO, IMF, and the

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)—are thoroughly discredited in the underdeveloped "South," no matter what is being stated officially. The genocidal carpet bombings carried out in the first weeks of this war have brought home what certain elites in the industrialized "North" really mean when they talk about "curbing overpopulation."

Given these realities, NAM is at a crossroads. If it wants to further represent and fight for the noble aims it was founded to realize more than 35 years ago, the Non-Aligned Movement must publicly denounce the Gulf war as the opening shot of another global colonial (and racial) war, which, if not stopped, will lead to the destruction of the entire developing sector, and might even trigger World War III. And NAM must do so soon. The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, if they want to survive, will have to remove all legitimacy from the fraud known as George Bush's new world order, and relaunch the fight for "peace through development." If the NAM does not choose to carry the banner of that historic struggle, of life-and-death importance to all of mankind, it will have written its own obituary as an institution.

Documentation

The Gulf war is going beyond the U.N. mandate

Directly after the ministerial meeting of 15 nations of the Non-Aligned Movement held on Feb. 12 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Indian Foreign Minister Vidyacharan Shukla released a statement to the press. Excerpts follow:

... Conditions that prevail today in West Asia are such, that the Non-Aligned Movement, which has traditionally taken a very crucial role to promote peace, when war had actually broken out, had to meet urgently and therefore this meeting in Belgrade took place.

One of the things that we are very concerned about is the loss of civilian lives and destruction of infrastructure of a non-military nature, and we know that a certain mandate has been given by the Security Council to use all means to achieve a certain object, that is, the vacation of aggression of Iraq on Kuwait. But a good many of us have doubts whether the means that have been used, whether they are excessive or not, and the scale of operations which have been undertaken, go beyond the mandate that was given by the Security Council. This point was also discussed, and I am sure that the Security Council, when it meets, will evaluate this situation and come to a conclusion.

We are very keen that the mandate given to the coalition forces should not be exceeded during these operations and there should be no violation of the mandate given. The prohibition on the use of chemical weaponry was emphasized, and we also found absolute unanimity on the question of nuclear weapons, which we all said was a crime against humanity, and a warning should be sounded that nobody should ever think in terms of using these weapons of mass destruction.

The question of various consequences of war, and the extent of bad effects on the countries who have gathered here was also discussed, and it was evident that the main thrust of the discussion was how to ensure the vacation of aggression and cessation of hostilities which should be a simultaneous process, it cannot be otherwise, this is what emerged from the deliberations.

Apart from this immediate need for vacation of aggression and cessation of hostilities, there is also a need to immediately start a process of durable peace in West Asia, and also to see that the peace that is established is not disturbed in the future, and that a peace conference under U.N. auspices takes place which should discuss particularly the question of Palestine and the difficulties that Palestinian people have been facing for long, long years. This also was an unanimous point, that was taken up. . . .

The doubt that had been expressed by several quarters, that in a unipolar world, the Non-Aligned Movement would lose its relevance—the meeting today proved that not only has the Movement not lost its relevance, but its effectiveness and need has been more effectively felt, and it is certainly going to play a very decisive role in bringing peace to West Asia.

Interview: Vidyacharan Shukla

North-South wars a matter of grave concern

During a meeting with several journalists in Belgrade, among them Hartmut Cramer and Mary Burdman from EIR, Indian Foreign Minister Vidyacharan Shukla answered the following questions on Feb. 13.

EIR: Was there any discussion of the much talked-about but so far undefined “new world order”? What is your personal opinion of the new world order stipulated by President Bush?

Shukla: I do not think that there was any particular mention of the new world order as such, but the post-crisis scenario was mentioned by some of us. I, for instance, said that we must pay attention, after the war is over, to what kind of situation is going to be created and how to deal with it.

On behalf of India, I emphasized two points: First, a

reasonable security setup, and then a peace conference on West Asian questions, including the Palestinian question. We did not go into economic reconstruction. I also mentioned various points on the huge destruction that has taken place in Iraq and Kuwait, who are both important members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and that destruction dictates for them to rebuild and bring them back to their former shape. This was what was discussed on the future of the area, but the new world order was not mentioned by anybody.

UPI: Was there a disagreement among participants in the meeting regarding the roots of the crisis itself, and on the question of whether a peace formula should be preceded by an Iraqi agreement to withdraw, or should be begun by an immediate cease-fire?

Shukla: Actually, most of the debate took place yesterday on these two points. Today, there was total unanimity on these points. The root cause of the crisis was identified as Iraqi aggression on Kuwait, and there was also total unanimity that there should be simultaneous declaration of intent to withdraw, and a cease-fire and cessation of hostilities.

EIR: Was there any proposal that the Non-Aligned Movement as a whole or the individual members should try to convoke a General Assembly meeting of the U.N., which would push for an immediate cease-fire?

Shukla: That was not discussed. What was discussed was, how should we proceed after this meeting, and the idea was, informally. There should be a Bureau meeting at the Ministers' level as soon as possible.

BBC: What will be the next steps?

Shukla: We hope that peace will be established in West Asia; the main and immediate task is to establish peace in West Asia. Then there will be an effort to set up a peacekeeping force under the auspices of the U.N. and the peace conference under U.N. auspices. These are the next steps to be taken.

EIR: Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark was just in Baghdad, and he said that the carpet bombing is causing a tragedy. King Hussein of Jordan gave a speech Feb. 6 saying that what is happening in Iraq could spill over not only to the whole region, but to the entire Third World. More and more it is being argued that this war could be the prelude to a North-South war, directed against the entire South. Do you see that this could happen?

Shukla: During such tragedies, all kinds of fears are expressed and various apprehensions come out. There is no doubt that damage to civilian life and property has been caused by this war, and it is a matter of very, very great regret to all people of the world. We are hoping that this will be stopped as quickly as possible.

This particular matter has to be looked into further. When

the mandate was given to the coalition forces to go and get the aggression vacated from Kuwait, it was specifically for that purpose only. If you say, "all other means," or "other means," that couldn't mean the destruction of civilian property or huge amounts of civilians: women, children, old people, helpless people who are trapped there, including a large number of Palestinians and Egyptians and others who are working in Iraq and Kuwait in addition to the local people. It is a matter of grave concern that it shouldn't take the shape that you are mentioning.

Interview: Ali Alatas

Non-Aligned new order different from Bush's

Hartmut Cramer and Mary Burdman of EIR interviewed Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas on Feb. 13 in Belgrade, after the ministerial meeting of 15 countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

EIR: Mr. Alatas, are you satisfied with the outcome of this meeting?

Alatas: Yes, I am satisfied with the outcome. As you know, it was an informal meeting, an action oriented meeting. And therefore I am satisfied with the results.

EIR: Did your country have its own proposal?

Alatas: Yes, we had our own proposal, as other countries had their proposals; and these have been discussed of course.

EIR: How do you explain the fact that there was no formal statement made at the end?

Alatas: As I said, this was an informal meeting, and there was no necessity for it. But the results will be acted upon.

EIR: The chairman of this meeting, Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Loncar, said yesterday that the new world order, as stipulated by U.S. President George Bush, was not discussed at this meeting. Now, because it seems obvious that Mr. Bush's new world order is totally different from the concept of a just new world economic order for which the Non-Aligned Movement has fought for so long. . . .

Alatas: Yes, oh yes, we are talking about two different things. . . .

EIR: Wouldn't it therefore be appropriate for the Non-Aligned Movement to say clearly what it thinks about the

new world order of Mr. Bush?

Alatas: We have already spoken out, especially since the Belgrade conference [of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1989], for a new world order in which each country could make its contributions. But I think this war, which is a tragic war, has changed all that.

Interview: James Herat

Gulf war an economic disaster for Non-Aligned

Mary Burdman and Hartmut Cramer interviewed Sri Lankan Foreign Minister James Herat in Belgrade on Feb. 13.

EIR: How do you view the way U.S. President George Bush is conducting this war?

Herat: The issue is not what the United States does, it is what the United Nations can do about the crisis.

EIR: Can you tell us what has been the economic effects of this war on the Non-Aligned nations?

Herat: Disastrous! Disastrous! Specifically, for Sri Lanka, it has affected us immensely, in the sense that all our nationals have to get back. We had 100,000 nationals there, who were sending back a great deal of foreign exchange, and the sanctions have stopped all our trade with Iraq.

EIR: Was the economic issue discussed by the Non-Aligned at this meeting?

Herat: No, the economic crisis never came up as such, as an issue. The only thing is that we want to bring peace to the region.

EIR: Do you think that the Non-Aligned will be taking the issue up?

Herat: Yes.

EIR: For there to be peace in the Middle East, there must be an economic solution—

Herat: Political, political solution.

EIR: What is your view of George Bush's new world order? Is this completely different from what the Non-Aligned Movement has been fighting for the just new economic order?

Herat: It has to be a *just* economic order.

EIR: What about Bush's new world order?

Herat: Well, let us see if that will come.