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Welcoming Professor Lothar Lutze:

30 Years Branch Office of the South Asia Institute in New Delhi

Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi, 26 September 1992

Mr Ambassador, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you very much for joining us to welcome Professor Dr Lothar Lutze as the new Representative of the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University. There is no need to introduce Professor Lutze at length. He headed this Office twice before: from January 1966 to October 1968 and again from October 1978 till March 1980. Professor Lutze, focussing on Modern Languages and Literatures of South Asia and being the only one in Germany – to my knowledge – who has been awarded the title of Professor of South Asian Modern Languages and Literatures, combines both classical and modern Indian studies. One of his outstanding accomplishments was founding the Hindi Summer Courses at the Hindi Department of Delhi University, which turned out to be a tremendous success; they are not only attended by foreign, but also by non-Hindi speaking Indian students.

Among those present today, there are many colleagues and students from Heidelberg as well as Indian scholars and students, whom we were happy to have with us at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg. I cannot name them all.

Let me take this opportunity to remind us and you of the fact that the South Asia Institute was founded 30 years ago, among others, on the instigation of the then Vice-President and later President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, who also suggested the name of the Institute.

This was the beginning of a very active cooperation between Heidelberg and India. We had the encouraging support from many institutions here, like the University Grants Commission, the India International Centre, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the Indian Council for Social Sciences, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, the Survey of Archaeology, the National Museum, the National Archives, the Crafts Museum, and not to forget, the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Home Ministry. To be mentioned are the close relations to many of India's most outstanding universities, with whom we have a fruitful exchange of researchers and teachers. And it is not the Capital alone: some of the most intensive contacts were, for example, in Maharashtra and Orissa, the former being the chosen second mother country of Professor Günther Sontheimer, the latter the home of Dr. Ancharlott Eschmann, both very dear colleagues and friends who died unexpectedly and very suddenly.

There are other colleagues to be remembered: Professors Umar Rolf von Ehrenfels, Hermann Goetz, Hermann Kopp and Otto Schiller, all of whom are still well-known in India for their outstanding scholarly works.

The fathers of the Institute, if I may say so, in the early sixties, likewise felt the urgent need for social regional as well as international comparative research. South Asia with its old cultural traditions presented the perfect challenge: continuing the studies of classical Indology as represented by Max Mueller, and to concentrate on a modern India, too. The outcome was the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University as a centre of contemporary interdisciplinary

regional research. It is this interaction of the systematically oriented disciplines of social and natural sciences and the more regionally oriented disciplines of the humanities which I feel – still makes the work at the Institute so challenging.

In the mid sixties, the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) set up one of its first regional research programmes (number 16, to be exact) the “Sonderforschungsbereich 16 Südasiensforschung”, the South Asia Interdisciplinary Regional Research Project, concentrating on Orissa and the Dhanbad region. Both projects turned out to be very successful and the Indian and German colleagues involved have published widely both in India and in Germany.

At the very beginning, it became clear that this Institute should have a basis in India, closely interacting with anybody concerned, be it scholars, government authorities or whomsoever.

Prof. Heimo Rau, who in 1962 was the Director of the Max Mueller Bhavan here in New Delhi and at the same time a member of the South Asia Institute, was asked to act as the first representative of our Institute. Since then, our relationship and collaboration with the Max Mueller Bhavan has always been very close. Therefore, I would like to say “thank you” to the Goethe Institute. Special thanks are also due to the German Embassy, who always has supported our work in India and will undoubtedly do so in the future.

We are always asked as to what the task of the Branch Office actually is: Is it a cultural institution? Is it to serve as a camp base for research? Is it some kind of a liaison office, both for German and Indian scholars and students? The answer is: A little bit of everything, and we hope to have satisfied our ‘customers’ as far as possible.

Of course, I cannot go into the details of all the activities pursued by my colleagues and friends, but I must stress the most efficient assistance of our staff members here in New Delhi who are always helping us in tackling with the unavoidable bureaucratic paperwork. Some of them have been with us now for more than twenty years and to them, also, I wish to express not only on my behalf, but on behalf of the South Asia Institute as a whole, our thanks and gratefulness.

Professor Lutze will take over from the first of October and I am sure he will meet with the same friendliness and cooperation which was accorded to me. I wish to thank all colleagues and friends and the authorities concerned for their assistance and guidance during my period of office.

Thank you very much!