

SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

October 1, 2008

Re: Summary report of 2008 SAR/EHU Meeting & Symposium in Vilnius, Lithuania

Dear SAR friends,

Please find attached the report of the 2008 Scholars at Risk/European Humanities University Meeting & Symposium “*Defending the university: Academic freedom in Central and Eastern Europe*” which took place on June 20-21, 2008 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

More than 70 faculty, administrators, advocates and guests from 35 institutions in over 18 countries participated in the weekend’s events. The report summarizes key discussions and outlines proposals for follow-up. I invite everyone, especially those unable to attend the events in Vilnius, to review the report and to send any additional suggestions.

Many thanks again to our hosts the European Humanities University (EHU) and everyone who made the events such a great success. Thanks to Rector Anatoli Mikhailov, Vice-Rector Vladimir Dounaev, Anna Gerasimova, Alina Juskiene and the EHU students who kindly volunteered their time.

Thanks to our keynote Senator Josef Jarab and all of the panelists, chairs and discussants, most especially those who traveled long distances.

Thanks to the SAR Board, especially those who were able to participate: Irv Epstein and Paul Martin. Thanks also to SAR Deputy Director, Sinead O’Gorman, who did a brilliant job organizing the events.

Finally, we warmly thank all of our sponsors including the Open Society Institute, Sigrid Rausing Trust, the Arcadia Trust and individual *Friends of SAR* who help make these events and all of our work possible.

I hope you enjoy the report and look forward to working with all of you on implementing its recommendations.

Sincerely,



Robert Quinn
Director



SUMMARY REPORT

On June 20-21, 2008 the Scholars at Risk Network and the European Humanities University co-hosted a meeting and symposium in Vilnius, Lithuania on *"Defending the University: Academic Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe."* The purpose of the event was to build solidarity among scholars and institutions and to identify practical approaches for defending the intellectual space. Seventy participants from 35 institutions in 18 countries attended the symposium. Outcomes of the event include the publication of a resolution in support of EHU and a set of 13 proposals for follow-up activities. Working groups were formed to develop the proposals. At the time of writing, the implementation work is underway and moving forward on several fronts. The highlights of the two-day event included:

Workshop & Network Orientation

- Academic Freedom Workshop
- Orientation for new member institutions and prospective members
- Discussion of SAR activities and outreach, including new partner networks
- Discussion of advocacy strategies, including academic freedom workshops

Symposium

- Keynote lecture by Josef Jarab, Senator, Czech Republic
- Case studies and personal experiences, including reports from Belarus, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, Uzbekistan
- Examples of vehicles for responding to threats to higher education values
- Plenary discussion and development of a follow-up plan of action

A full summary of event proceedings follows.

FRIDAY, JUNE 20

ACADEMIC FREEDOM WORKSHOP

Events opened with a workshop on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, held on the morning of June 20th. All symposium participants were invited to attend. The workshop was one of several to take place around the world, with the goal of asking higher education leaders, advocates and other experts to contribute to developing a common framework for analyzing academic freedom related questions and to developing future strategies for promoting higher education values at the national, regional and global level. Participants were provided with materials in advance of the workshop. The materials included 1) a draft common framework for analyzing academic freedom related issues, 2) two case studies and 3) a draft list of proposed future activities. The materials were developed by Scholars at Risk and the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR, www.nearinternational.org).

SAR director, **Robert Quinn**, opened proceedings with a short introduction to the Scholars at Risk network and a description of the goals of the workshops. Mr. Quinn then presented the draft common framework for analyzing academic freedom questions. The framework document aims to classify the most common academic freedom concerns in order of severity and then to classify possible local, national, regional and global responses to these concerns. Participants were asked to test the framework against the two case examples in the set of materials and against their own experience. In order to test the framework, participants were asked to decide: (i) whether or not the classifications make sense (ii) whether or not all important concerns are represented (iii) what other responses might not be represented and (iv) what new tools or strategies for response might be created.



Academic Freedom Workshop

Participants broke into two small groups with Robert Quinn and **John Akker**, Executive Director of NEAR, as moderators. Participants introduced themselves and discussion ensued.

Highlights from the discussions:

- Several participants remarked that the case studies captured many of the types and patterns of academic freedom-related concerns that they themselves had experienced. While the majority of participants had not personally experienced the more severe threats listed in the common framework document (in the ‘personhood’ category in particular), many knew colleagues who had experienced such forms of persecution.
- Of the concerns addressed in the framework document, the issue of self-censorship is one of the most significant for the region and one of the most challenging to identify and address.
- A related but separate concern in the region is the approach to the teaching of history. Several participants expressed the fear that newly-written histories, tailoring the past to the present, are quickly becoming ‘truth’.

- Response strategies should at all times be tailored to the severity of the threat and to the context of the problem experienced. One participant remarked that opposition by faculty or students to government-imposed policies affecting the university can in some contexts easily lead to dismissal/expulsion, while more low-key interventions might be more successful.
- Early intervention is essential. Act *before* people are arrested. If at all possible, act *before* a potentially restrictive new regime is in place and has stronger legal, financial and ideological tools at its disposal. One participant urged her fellow academics: “When you begin to notice even the slightest subordination of media and other institutions, react!”



Academic Freedom Workshop

- There exists in many places a lack of trust between universities and the Ministry of Education. There is a need to help build understanding that excellence strengthens both state and university, and that a culture of excellence depends on a culture of fair critique.
- Student and youth groups play a vital role in developing response strategies to academic freedom concerns on campus. Professors should feel a responsibility to prepare their students well for this role. Promoting a quality education is therefore the best long-term response strategy.
- The community of scholars often fragments in the face of political issues and threats. Solidarity between academics and institutions is of utmost importance and needs to be constantly reinforced.

Areas in need of further discussion and possible follow-up activities:

- How do we get the concepts of academic freedom and institutional autonomy into the university consciousness in places where these topics are not now discussed? In other words, on the agenda of concerns discussed?
- How do we reach out to the rectors/leaders of institutions about these issues?
- How do we target parents as stakeholders? What activities can we develop to connect with parents in addition to the general public as stakeholders in higher education?

Following the discussions, **J. Paul Martin**, SAR board member and Director of Human Rights Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University gave a short presentation on strategies for defending academic freedom. Professor Martin emphasized the need to promote courses within the university that include conflict-solving discourse, that call for critical thinking and discursive debate, that address national and international problems and that encourage independent research and publications. However, he also highlighted the importance of articulating the social benefits of academic freedom to the community at large. To this end, universities should organize more special events: films, conferences, debates etc. especially in the humanities, open to the

community at large. Professor Martin also emphasized the need to expand national and international networking and to work closely with the media in public outreach efforts.

SAR NETWORK MEETING & ORIENTATION

Irving Epstein, SAR board member and Professor of Educational Studies at Illinois-Wesleyan University chaired the SAR network meeting and orientation for new members. Professor Epstein welcomed all participants and introduced the panelists.

Robert Quinn, SAR director, began by introducing the work of Scholars at Risk. Participants watched a short introductory video and Mr. Quinn described SAR's work along three tracks: direct assistance to threatened academics and institutions; capacity-building and developing new tools for advocacy; scholarship and education promoting a rights-based higher education sector.

Professor Epstein then introduced **Anna Dolidze**, a legal scholar from Georgia with expertise in public international law, Eastern and Central European law, and humanitarian and human rights law. Ms. Dolidze described her personal experience in Georgia and spoke about how the SAR network assisted her. Because of her husband's political work and because of her own human rights work, Ms. Dolidze experienced intimidation, surveillance, arrest, detention and threats of physical violence. She left Georgia in 2007 and came to the US. SAR nominated Ms. Dolidze for the Albert Podell Global Scholar at Risk fellowship at New York University School of Law, which she was awarded for the 2007-08 academic year.

Following Ms. Dolidze's testimony, participants heard from representatives of SAR member institutions and affiliate organizations. **Marit Egner** from the Department of Research Administration at the University of Oslo (UiO) described UiO's experience hosting scholars and her department's efforts to involve other Norwegian universities in this work. University of Oslo has been a member of the SAR network since 2001. Since then, in addition to hosting two scholars, the university has organized activities to increase awareness about academic freedom-related issues among staff and students. Such activities include publications, posts to the university website, organizing meetings and seminars on academic freedom. UiO works closely with the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH); the focus of this student-run organization's 2008-09 campaign is academic freedom. Ms. Egner introduced two members of SAIH who were present at the network meeting: **Sophie Kristoffersen** and **Runar Balto**, and encouraged participants to talk to them about mobilizing students around the issue of academic freedom.



John Akker, (CARA)

John Akker from the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) described the work of the CARA-SAR UK Universities network. The network, which was launched in 2006 and has 43 UK university members, aims to facilitate cooperation and collaboration between UK higher education institutions in support of refugee and threatened academics and in defense and promotion of academic and university freedoms worldwide. A "pathfinder" grant scheme was introduced in 2007 to provide selected UK universities with seed funding of up to £10,000 to help develop more effective internal systems, policies and practices in support of refugee and at-

risk academics. Nine grants were awarded in 2007-2008 for projects in the following areas: mentoring, advice/guidance, fellowships and language training. Mr. Akker highlighted CARA's recent work to help Iraqi academics and pointed to the need for more publicity for their plight. Since late 2006, CARA has received over 200 requests for assistance from Iraqi academics in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. In 2007, CARA provided 11 fellowships to Iraqi academics in the UK and arranged a further 20 placements at UK universities.

Berend Jonker of the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) in the Netherlands described UAF's long history of assisting refugee students. Since its founding in 1948, UAF has supported thousands of young intellectuals forced to flee their countries due to well-founded fear of persecution. Today, UAF supports approximately 2600 students from over 70 countries. In 2007, UAF began work to establish a partner network in the Netherlands in support of scholars at risk. Mr. Jonker outlined the important questions UAF has dealt with in moving the initiative forward. Such questions relate to the development of a model of cooperation with universities and SAR; ways for universities in the Netherlands to structure their support for SAR within their own institutions; ways to involve additional stakeholders; types of activities to be developed in Dutch universities to support threatened scholars and promote academic freedom; ways to fund the initiative; and ways to engage the media. UAF is planning a meeting in November 2008 to discuss launching a partner network of universities in the Netherlands.

Irving Epstein described Illinois Wesleyan University's experience hosting SAR scholars in the US. He advised participants on how to make a good argument to university administration in favor of hosting a scholar at risk. In Professor Epstein's view, hosting a scholar can help to address institutional needs in three areas: curriculum, pedagogy and cost-efficiency. First, it provides an opportunity to cover areas and disciplines that are not often taught and an opportunity to extend curricular emphasis in areas that are of emerging interest. Second, having an at-risk scholar on campus provides an opportunity to expose students to experts who have a wealth of unique experiences. Third, in many cases hosting a scholar requires little more of an institutional commitment than the hiring of adjuncts or contingency faculty. Professor Epstein also noted the importance of involving the entire campus in the hosting process, soliciting support from different departments and ensuring that others apart from the campus SAR representative can assist the scholar. He provided advice on addressing the scholar's practical needs and ended with a note of caution on some of the challenges involved in hosting. Such challenges include in particular, avoiding placing pressure on the scholar to tell his/her story or depicting the scholar's personal biography in overly sensational terms.

Sinead O'Gorman, Deputy Director at Scholars at Risk provided additional examples of SAR cooperation with member institutions and individuals around the world. Examples of cooperation include new hosting opportunities (e.g. at London School of Economics, University of Cape Town and the SAR Israel network); academic freedom workshops (co-hosted with institutions and research centers in Jordan, Russia and Ethiopia); new models of cooperation with student groups (e.g. SAIH, Norway) and the global academic freedom survey (e.g. in cooperation with faculty and students at Fordham Law School in the US). Ms. O'Gorman outlined the rights and obligations of membership of the SAR network, described the different categories of membership (university/affiliate/friend) and asked participants to encourage their universities to join the network.

Questions from participants during this session focused on the ways in which SAR works with scholars to assist them beyond their first temporary hosting arrangement; SAR's process for 'vetting' scholars before circulating their details to member institutions with a request for assistance; funding available for hosting scholars and the visa-related issues involved.

AWARDS CEREMONY

The symposium opened on Friday evening, June 20th with an awards ceremony. **Robert Quinn**, SAR director, **J. Paul Martin** and **Irving Epstein** (SAR board members) presented certificates of recognition to the following special invitees:

- **Deividas Matulionis**, State Secretary of the Ministry accepted a certificate in recognition of the **Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs'** political and financial support of EHU.
- **Giedrius Viliūnas**, Secretary of the **Ministry of Education and Science** of the Republic of Lithuania accepted a certificate in recognition of the Ministry's work to register EHU as an accredited higher education institution in Lithuania.
- A certificate was presented *in absentia* to **Rector Alvydas Pumputis**, on behalf of **Mykolas Romeris University** in Lithuania in recognition of the university's help to establish EHU-International as a legal entity.
- A certificate of recognition was presented *in memoriam* to **Rolandas Pavilionis**, former Rector of Vilnius University, member of the Lithuanian parliament and member of the European parliament. The award was accepted by his wife, **Maria Aušrinė Pavilionienė**. Mr. Pavilionis was held in very high esteem by EHU and was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of EHU and all that it represents. His work with EHU was an outstanding example of academic solidarity and fruitful cooperation between Lithuanians and Belarusians and was a considerable contribution to academic freedom in the region and in Belarus in particular.



*l-r, J. Paul Martin (Columbia University),
Irving Epstein (Illinois Wesleyan), Giedrius
Viliunas (Ministry of Education and Science)*

RECTORS' PANEL

The Rectors' Panel was attended by Ministers, Ambassadors, VIPs, symposium participants and EHU students. J. Paul Martin, SAR board member, moderated the discussion. The four panelists were: **Anatoli Mikhailov**, Rector, EHU, **Howard Robinson**, Provost, Central European University, Budapest, **Gigi Tevzadze**, Rector, Ilia Chavchavadze State University, Georgia and **Gregory Prince**, Former President, Hampshire College, USA. The Rectors, President and Provost were invited to discuss their perspectives on and experience with issues of academic freedom and university autonomy in theory and practice. They shared their views on the major issues confronting them as university leaders, how these issues intersect with issues of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and how they view the scope of their role as rector/provost

with regard to these issues. They provided examples from their time as rector/provost that demonstrated how issues of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are navigated in practice.

Discussion highlights:

Howard Robinson expressed solidarity with EHU and his willingness to learn from the difficulties it had faced. He described CEU's founding principles and efforts to deal with issues of transition, development and poverty around the world. He pointed to the need for a diversification of power within universities. He struck a note of caution about classifying certain issues as academic freedom-related—it should not become a catch-all category for all types of problems with higher education systems.



l-r, Anatoli Mikhailov (Rector, EHU) Gigi Tevzadze (Rector, Ilia Chavchavadze University, Georgia)

Anatoli Mikhailov began by reflecting that it is sometimes hard to understand that in a place only 25km from Vilnius there is a very different reality. He described how EHU had become a symbol in the region for opposition to academic repression and how the case of EHU demonstrates that there are still those in power who think that free thinking is dangerous. He stated the need for everyone involved to analyze lessons learned by EHU so that mistakes are not repeated. He cautioned participants against engaging in activity for the sake of activity and urged those who wished to make a contribution to make their activities functional.

Gregory Prince emphasized the need to turn to students for inspiration and ideas and to teach students to challenge authority in appropriate ways. In his view, the latter is key to building healthy societies. There is a need for universities to build structures and cultures that encourage difference. The institution has the responsibility to model values it seeks to instill in students.



Gregory Prince, Anatoli Mikhailov

And above all, universities need to engage civil society. The benefits should then flow both ways: ultimately it is not the university that will save society, but society that will save the university.

Gigi Tevzadze stated that every university should have goals with regard to academic freedom and university autonomy, and these goals should be calculable by indicators. The former Soviet Union aimed to minimize choices. In a healthy higher education sector, students and faculty should be presented with the maximum number of choices possible. He emphasized that it is crucial that students are taught and encouraged to use critical thinking skills.

The moderator encouraged participants—EHU students in particular—to engage with the panelists, to ask questions and give comments. One participant asked whether panelists thought it the responsibility of visiting researchers from 'the West' to raise questions about the conditions in which colleagues at their host institution were working. Another referenced one of the case studies presented in the SAR-NEAR workshop materials in which, in her view, students were

presented as ‘the unpredictable element’. She stated the need for university administrations to take students more seriously, consider them equal stakeholders in university life and be willing to involve them at non-traditional levels. Another student expressed his fear that lecturers were distancing themselves further and further from students; that lecturers were just delivering knowledge without facilitating the production of knowledge. Professor Mikhailov stated that it is difficult for faculty members to facilitate the production of knowledge when they themselves are not involved in the creation of knowledge. He recognizes this as a very serious problem. Howard Robinson added that staff-student ratio could also be an important factor in this regard. Gregory Prince encouraged faculty members to not only ask students for their opinion but to give them real audience when they give it.



Rectors' Panel: Questions from the audience

The first day's proceedings concluded at 7.30pm. A reception followed in the adjoining lounge.

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

SESSION 1:

KEYNOTE: JOSEF JARAB, SENATOR, CZECH REPUBLIC

Yevhen Bystrytsky, Executive Director of the International Renaissance Foundation welcomed all symposium participants and opened the day's proceedings by introducing the keynote, Senator **Josef Jarab**. Josef Jařab is professor of English and American Literature and director of the Center for Comparative Cultural Studies at Palacký University, Olomouc in the Czech Republic. He is a founding member of the Czech Learned Society and the first chairman of the Czech Fulbright Committee and the Czech and Slovak Association for American Studies. He was vice-chairman of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Senator Jarab's lecture was, in his own words, ‘a personal tour de force’ through academic freedom. He described how he gradually came to learn what academic freedom was about and how it related to institutional autonomy, democracy and humanism. Senator Jarab began by describing his early days at Olomouc University, a time when academic freedom was not discussed by the authorities, a time when the Soviet party determined curricula and the university was under close surveillance by the party headquarters. Everything was suspect. As learning went on under close surveillance, Jarab and his colleagues had to use every opportunity to teach ‘between the lines’, and teach students to read between the lines.

After the ‘velvet revolution’ in 1989, Jarab became the first freely elected university administrator in Czechoslovakia and served as rector of Palacký University, Olomouc for seven years. Shortly after he was elected to the position, he was handed two books: one with the names



Keynote by Senator Josef Jarab

of people that he could appoint; the other with the names of those he could not. He was also handed a pistol: 'just because you never know'. During his time as rector, he urged his colleagues to focus on teaching students how to think critically. One of his biggest challenges was deciding how to deal with in-university informers when you knew who they were. Addressing the role of politics on campus was also a critical challenge. Jarab's administration banned political debates on campus and closed political clubs. He came to realize quickly that this was a mistake, as this prevented faculty from being able to discuss the issues of the day with the best students. Another negative outcome was that the participation of students in campus senate decreased over this time.

In Jarab's view, his greatest contribution to the university was his decision to support the reduction of teaching hours. He understood this as an academic freedom issue. Faculty and students need time to read, to write, to argue and to debate in addition to hours spent in the classroom and lecture halls. Under Jarab's leadership, teaching hours were reduced from 46 hours a week to 24. This decision initially met with hostility from many quarters. He was told he was lowering standards and reducing the quality of students' education but he remained determined to stick to his decision.

After a short discussion of his time as Rector at CEU in Budapest, Senator Jarab ended his talk with a description of his experience as part at the Czech delegation at the Council of Europe. It was during this time that he started to think in more explicit terms about academic freedom as a human right and the implications and obligations this would bring. He started a 2-3 year discussion on this at the Council of Europe. Despite several significant successes, he concluded that the Council still has a long way to go to give this issue the recognition it deserves.

Senator Jarab took questions from the audience. One question related to how best to define academic freedom such that the definition recognizes its limits and its' sometimes unfortunate constructs. Senator Jarab replied that there are legal instruments to help draw clear lines about what is acceptable e.g. in the case of holocaust deniers. He related that as rector he was opposed to throwing out books from the Marxist library and instead gave students the task of going through the library and reading and sorting these. This, he said, was eye-opening for the students. 'Recognizing that dogmatism is not compatible with academic freedom does not mean that we should not study dogmatism'. In support of Jarab's response, Gregory Prince added that academic freedom does not mean that anything goes. People still have to make judgments and decisions based on principles. Other questions related to how universities can be expected to meet not only the immediate needs of society but also to meet the unknown demands of future unpredictable changes, globalization etc. How should universities best respond to challenges of the future? A final question related to concrete next steps that Senator Jarab would recommend. Jarab responded that participants should advocate to make it obligatory for member governments of the Council of Europe to promote and defend academic freedom within their countries.

CASE STUDIES ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Panelists in sessions 2 and 3 were asked to discuss, based on the present conditions and recent experience in their countries, the ways that academic freedom and university autonomy are

recognized within the political, legal, social and educational frameworks in their country and their higher education institution. They were also asked to provide examples of recent developments—positive or negative—including policy or legislative actions, events, controversies or actions involving particular scholars or institutions; and to assess the effectiveness of national, regional or international interventions which have been tried already to address these issues in the country, or to suggest new interventions which might be considered.

SESSION 2:

Session 2 was chaired by **Pavel Tereshkovich**, Academic Co-Director of the Center for Advanced Studies and Education (CASE), in Lithuania and Belarus. Before introducing the panelists, Tereshkovich gave some background on his own situation. He worked for 17 years in the Faculty of History at Belarus State University in Minsk. In summer 2007 he was accused of collaboration with EHU and felt pressure to leave his position. In Tereshkovich's opinion, this is because he had violated the unspoken and unwritten 'rules of intellectual survival' in the totalitarian state which are, in his view, the following: "Do not think. If you think, do not speak. If you speak, do not publish. If you publish, say it is not me".

The first case study in session 2 was presented by **Rimantas Vaitkus**, Pro-Rector for International Affairs at Vilnius University, the oldest university in Lithuania. Professor Vaitkus signaled the importance of June 3, 1988 as the date that marked the beginning of a greater degree of freedom for universities in Lithuania. On this day, Lithuanian intellectuals gathered at the Academy of Sciences and established the Reform Movement of Lithuania. Vaitkus remarked that now that Lithuania is an independent Republic and a member of the EU, universities have very different and thankfully less overwhelming concerns. The main challenges to universities in Lithuania today are in the areas of accessibility (in terms of transparency, location and tuition), quality of education and effective management (including autonomy from state). Vaitkus noted that Article 9 of the law on higher education in Lithuania (passed in 2000) guarantees academic freedom and university autonomy under the constitution. The article states: 'Higher education establishments of the Republic of Lithuania shall have autonomy encompassing academic, administrative, economic and financial management activities, based on the principle of self-government, academic freedom, and defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, in this Law and higher education establishment statutes.'

Galina Lisitsyna, Vice Rector at the European University at Saint Petersburg (EUSP) spoke about this university's establishment in 1992 at a time when a new intellectual space was being created in Russia. The university came into existence to provide Russians with an opportunity to attend a free university within Russia instead of having to travel abroad for their education. Because of its strong international connections faculty were able to communicate freely and to learn from international colleagues. Professor Lisitsyna related recent events at EUSP and the controversy that came to surround them. In 2007, it was alleged that EUSP received a grant from the EU to investigate the electoral policies of Russia – a project that was not supported by the university's contract. Later in early 2008, the university was inspected by the Federal Fire Safety Service, charged with 52 fire violations, and had its education license suspended. Although the facilities were old and did require improvements, there was general concern that the suspension was motivated by other, political factors. The university appealed for help. More than 1000

people and groups wrote letters in support of EUSP; 3,000 international colleagues signed a petition in support of the university and EUSP students formed student and alumni centers to coordinate activities in support of the university. EUSP was soon reopened, but continues to be watched closely by the authorities. Nonetheless, this is a good example of how creative resistance in support of the university helped to mitigate the situation.

Alexei Kouprianov, Laboratory of the Sociology of Science and Education at the Higher School of Economics at St. Petersburg, began by apologizing for not referring to any particular legislation governing academic freedom in Russia. He said: “I, like many Russians, believe that the formal regulations are sometimes less important than the routine practices which frequently have little in common with the law”. Kouprianov presented the case of a conflict between students of sociology at Moscow State University and the Dean of the department of Sociology. The example illustrates a situation where community outside the university can influence the actions a university takes even when the disagreement is intra-university in nature. Several factors contributed to aggravating the situation, one of most important being the lack of a national community of sociologists sharing the same set of basic values. The problem with this is that the measure of effective university education is therefore held against a standard that only the university itself creates.

Anna Dolidze, SAR scholar and visiting researcher at New York University Law School, described the educational reform process in Georgia. She cautioned that it is essential for universities to recognize the difference between reform and government interference, and to be able to detect the difference between good and bad intentions. When there is an unhealthy amount of government intervention in society, there are often few tools left for universities to assert control over their own operations. The problem that arose in Georgia was that all instruments that could have helped to take control out of the government’s hands and return it to the university were already gone (media, judiciary, etc). Research funding is still controlled by the Ministry of Education with very limited transparency.



Anna Dolidze, SAR scholar, Georgia

Sophie Howlett, Dean of Special and Extension Programs at the Central European University focused on the question of the authority of knowledge: Who creates it? Who reinforces it? How is it accepted? How is it passed on? In her view, the community of knowledge holders in post-Soviet areas consists of small, centralized groups; there is distance between normal academics and the people who decide what constitutes a discipline. Academics need to think about power in the classroom rather than only think about ideologies imposed from without.

Turgut Tarhanli, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Director of the Human Rights Law Research Center at Istanbul Bilgi University described three of the main academic freedom issues in Turkey today: Article 301 prosecutions, the headscarf issue, and discussion of relations between Turks and minorities. He related the details of the case of political science Professor Atilla Yayla. In January 2008, Professor Yayla was handed down a 15-month suspended jail term. He was found guilty of insulting the state's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. His crime was to make mild criticisms of the early Turkish republic. He is now living in self-imposed exile in Britain.

Professor Tarhanli summarized recent debates surrounding the headscarf issue. The most recent relevant legislation on the headscarf issue was in June 2008. Turkey's Constitutional Court cancelled constitutional amendments that would have allowed women to wear a headscarf in universities. The law envisaged amendments in articles 10 (on equality) and 42 (on the right to education).



Turgut Tarhanli, Irv Epstein

Finally, Professor Tarhanli related the details of the controversial conference dealing with historical relations between Turks and minorities, principally the Armenians, that was sponsored by three major universities in Istanbul—Bogazici, Bilgi and Sabanci—that was to be held in May 2005.

The organizers of the conference were accused of being traitors. Two attempts to hold the conference were blocked by the Turkish government; the conference was postponed but was eventually held in September that year. It was the first time this subject was so openly discussed in Turkey and this was celebrated by some as a real paradigm shift; a victory of academic freedom and society generally.

SESSION 3:

Georgiy Kasianov of the International Renaissance Foundation introduced the panelists.

Vladimir Dounaev, First Vice-Rector at EHU described how the process of legalization of academic repression in Belarus made it very difficult for academics to be law-abiding citizens. If citizens are asked to respect the law, Professor Dounaev remarked, governments must create laws to protect citizens. Professor Dounaev related the series of events in Belarus that led to the closure of EHU. He described in particular the gradual increase in the distance between Belarus and the positive trends in European integration in the area of higher education, including the Bologna process. After the 2001 presidential elections, the Belarusian government recognized a growing opposition to the Lukashenko regime among university students. The authorities radically changed their higher education policy in order to control what was being taught in university classrooms. The shock was meant to isolate Belarusian higher education from outside influences and restore a level of state control reminiscent of the Soviet era. Today, unfortunately this policy still lives on.

Peeter Tulviste, Member of the Parliament of Estonia, Professor of Cultural Psychology at the University of Tartu and former Rector at the University of Tartu began by offering words of solidarity with his colleague from Belarus. He emphasized that Estonia had not experienced such ideological pressure in recent times and that its challenges in the area of higher education were far less severe. Towards the end of the period of Soviet rule (1944-1991), the University of Tartu underwent structural changes and began to restore the content of academic studies and witnessed an intellectual revival. Professor Tulviste described two academic freedom related issues that he dealt with in his own institution: 1) The question of whether a mandatory retirement age was a positive development or not. The age limit was eventually abandoned. 2) Whether or not the

rector of the university should be freely elected. In 1993, the rector was freely elected for the first time since 1968.

Virgiliu Birladeanu, Associate Professor at the Institute of History, State and Law at the Academy of Sciences of Moldova presented the main academic freedom issues facing Moldova today. In 2007, Freedom House classified Moldova as a “Partly Free” country. Self-censorship is a serious problem. Scientists are divided into “patriots” and “non-patriots”. Many feel that the government does not work to encourage the development of civil society and will only support NGOs that are not political. The constitution condemns censorship and guarantees freedom of opinion and expression but in practice there are restrictions to information pluralism within press and academia. Authors of articles dealing with the question of Romanian nationalism have little hope of being published. These factors are contributing to a gradual process of brain drain. Professor Birladeanu recommends that SAR monitor the situation.

Taras Dobko, Senior Vice-Rector at the Ukrainian Catholic University argued that the principal obstacles to the implementation of academic freedom and university autonomy-related standards are cultural, not political, legal or economic. A prerequisite for academic freedom is a desire for academic excellence. Excellence is dependent on a culture of critique. This cannot be built without solidarity and international support. The structures that require academic excellence are lacking in Ukraine. There is a lack of trust between universities and the Ministry of Education. Professor Dobko reflected on whether the lack of critique is due to a lack of confidence, or lack of desire for real knowledge. There is a need to create a culture of non-tolerance for dishonesty—this will be more effective than legislation in this regard. He is hopeful that real positive change will come through students and this process is already underway.

Volodymyr Turchynovskyy, Vice Rector for Strategy and Planning at the Ukrainian Catholic University argued that Ukrainian universities need to undergo profound cultural transformations. Some of the main problems in the area of academic freedom include corruption, overly market-driven concepts of education, lack of recognition for certain departments that are not seen as contributing to the market (e.g. theology departments), inconsistent academic standards and university autonomy-related standards.

SESSION 4: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM & AUTONOMY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

This session was chaired by **Rimantas Vaitkus**, Vice-Rector for International Relations, Vilnius University. Each panelist was asked to focus on one aspect of their organization's work to protect academic freedom.

Hoda Almutawah of the Arab Society for Academic Freedom discussed the Society’s work to build a model of regional cooperation among individual scholars (as opposed to among universities). The Society believes that academic freedom is key to solving many of the human rights problems facing the region. The Amman Center for Human Rights held its first conference on academic freedom in 2004. Fifty professors participated from universities in eleven countries. At a second conference in 2006, participants expressed a desire to establish an academic freedom

society and asked the Amman Center to coordinate its establishment. In 2008, a regional conference on Academic Freedom in Arab Universities was held in Jordan in partnership with SAR, NEAR and the United Nations University. The Arab Society for Academic Freedom was formally launched on April 2, 2008. The Society aims to: disseminate information relating to academic freedom in Arab universities; to provide advice and support for academics whose freedom is being threatened; to encourage communication between academics and to set up a legal defense fund for academic work.

Michael Daxner, President of the Observatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum, extended an invitation to all symposium participants to attend the 20th Anniversary of the Magna Charta in Bologna, 18-20 September 2008. The Magna Charta Observatory aims to gather information, express opinions and prepare documents relating to the respect for, and protection of, the fundamental university values and rights laid down in the Magna Charta Universitatum signed in Bologna in 1988 by 388 Rectors of universities around the world. Today the Magna Charta has over 600 signatories.

Sarah Willcox of the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF) focused on SRF's efforts to assist individual scholars, in particular efforts to assist Iraqi scholars within the Middle East region. Since 2002, SRF has received more than 2000 requests for assistance from scholars in 100 countries. 219 scholars from 39 countries have been awarded fellowships and placed at institutions in 28 countries around the world. The Iraq Scholar Rescue Project aims to assist more than 150 of Iraq's most senior and most threatened academics in any academic discipline – through temporary academic positions at universities, colleges and other institutions of higher learning in the Middle East and North African regions. In doing so, the Scholar Rescue Fund hopes to contribute to the preservation of Iraq's vital intellectual capital and ensure that, when conditions permit, these scholars will be able to return home to rebuild their academic communities.



*Alexei Koupryanov (State
Higher School of Economics),
Jonathan Travis (NEAR)*

Jonathan Travis, Program Officer at the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) introduced this organization's work in the area of alert-writing and campaigns on behalf of threatened or imprisoned scholars. NEAR is a membership-based international NGO which facilitates international collaboration between organizations active in issues of academic freedom and educational rights. NEAR's primary activity is to bring international attention to violations of academic freedom and educational rights through an Action Alert Program. An Action Alert informs its audience of a violation or an abuse of academic freedom or educational human right and invites the reader to take effective action. In especially serious situations – such as those involving several academics and/or institutions or where the threat is particularly severe or prolonged – NEAR organises focused campaigns to build greater awareness and solidarity within the global higher education community.

Robert Quinn, Scholars at Risk Network focused on SAR's work on transparency and international standards. Mr. Quinn described, in particular, the SAR Global Academic Freedom Survey. This initiative aims to develop a reliable and systematic measure of academic freedom

and respect for human rights in higher education communities around the world. The survey employs a methodology developed by SAR and applied by researchers (students and faculty) at participating SAR institutions. The survey will help present a picture of academic freedom in the world today through the form of a focused report that allows for multidimensional comparisons among countries over time. Until now, the data needed to create this picture had not yet been assembled in a way that highlighted these particular issues. The survey aims at putting the pieces together in the right way. SAR believes that once such synthesis is available, it will become an invaluable tool to advocacy groups and stakeholders and will serve as a basis for dialogue, further research and positive policy recommendations. Mr. Quinn invited participants interested in participating in the survey project to contact SAR.

SESSION 5: PLENARY DISCUSSION & PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ACTION

One of the main goals of the symposium was to identify and develop positive actions aimed at strengthening academic freedom and institutional autonomy. To encourage such actions, participants were invited to submit proposals for follow-up activities.

Peeter Tulviste chaired the plenary discussion. The following proposals were presented during this session:

Proposal #1: Resolution in support of EHU¹

The proposal is that those assembled at the symposium endorse a statement in support of EHU, recognizing its success in continuing its liberal education mission despite being forced into exile; its importance as a model of resistance to attempts to eliminate academic freedom and institutional autonomy; and its invaluable contributions as a host institution for threatened scholars. [Irving Epstein, SAR]

Outcome: Approved.

Proposal #2: Invitation to universities to join Scholars at Risk

The proposal is that academics and higher education leaders at the symposium work to encourage their respective institutions to become members of the Scholars at Risk Network, and as members to join in SAR activities to promote academic freedom and to defend threatened scholars and universities worldwide. [Robert Quinn, SAR]

Outcome: Approved. Invitation extended.

Proposal #3: Invitation to establish national or regional SAR sections

The proposal is that academics and higher education leaders at the symposium [who are able], with the support of the SAR office and staff, work to encourage the universities in their country or region to organize into national or regional SAR sections, that will contribute to SAR activities to promote academic freedom and to defend threatened scholars, in ways best suited to local, national or regional interests and conditions. [Sinead O’Gorman, SAR]

Outcome: Approved (with minor modifications above). Invitation extended.

¹ See p.19 for Resolution on EHU.

Proposal #4: Academic Freedom Day

Academic freedom is a core right of scholars around the world. It needs and deserves continuous attention. One of the instruments to achieve this is the celebration of a worldwide Academic Freedom Day, which would enable universities, academies, and scholarly networks to dedicate annual attention to the rights of universities (institutional autonomy) and scholars (academic freedom) worldwide. It would be the day of an Annual Lecture on Academic Freedom, and of related teaching and student activities and events. It could then receive the same publicity as, for example, the annual World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. The proposal is to form a small committee to draft a letter and solicit co-signatures from academic NGOs and university partners before submitting it to UNESCO and/or the International Association of Universities in time for the next UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2009. The letter would request the establishment by UNESCO of 11 November (date of the approval of UNESCO's Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997)) or another suitable day as Academic Freedom Day. [Antoon De Baets, NCH]

Outcome: Approved. After some objections to 11 November and discussion of more appropriate dates to recommend, suggestions including 4 August (the date EHU was closed in Belarus); 4 June (end of Tiananmen Square student demonstrations); 18 September (signing of the Magna Charta Universitatum), a committee was established to draft a letter and solicit signatures before submitting to UNESCO, IAU or other bodies. Committee members include Antoon de Baets (the Netherlands); Vera Rich (UK); Gigi Tevzadze (Georgia) and Robert Quinn (SAR).

Proposal #5: Invitation to universities to sign the Magna Charta Universitatum

The proposal is that universities represented at the symposium attend the Celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the Magna Charta Universitatum in Bologna, Italy on September 18-20, 2008 including, if they have not already done so, becoming signatory universities to the Magna Charta of European Universities. [Michael Daxner, Magna Charta Observatory]

Outcome: Approved. Invitation extended.

Proposal #6: Autonomy, Responsibility & Academic Freedom at the WCHE 2009

The 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) included 'Autonomy, Social Responsibility and Academic Freedom' as one of central discussions, and the concluding "World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century" urged priority action on these themes at the national level and the level of systems and institutions. The Declaration also urged UNESCO to take the initiative on drawing up an international instrument on academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility in connection with the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. With the next World Conference on Higher Education now scheduled for July 2009, the proposal is to form a small committee to draft a letter and solicit co-signatures from academic NGOs and university partners before submitting it to UNESCO and/or the International Association of Universities, urging that 'Autonomy, Social Responsibility and Academic Freedom' again be included as a central theme of the conference and plan of action; urging that UNESCO renew its commitment to the establishment of an international instrument on academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility; and offering the assistance of the signatories in advancing these aims. [John Akker, CARA]

Outcome: Approved. Committee established. Committee members include John Akker (CARA); Anatoli Mikhailov (EHU); Irving Epstein (IWU); Robert Quinn (SAR).

Proposal #7: Student involvement in SAR committees

University members of the Scholars at Risk Network are encouraged, but not required, to establish an interdisciplinary committee of faculty members and administrators to coordinate their participation in Network activities. Recognizing the valuable contributions which students have made to SAR activities, and their direct interest in questions of academic freedom, it is proposed that SAR issue a recommendation to university members that student representatives be included on their local SAR committees. [Lauren Herman, Harvard University] Outcome: Approved.

Proposal #8: Develop a “World Ranking of Universities by Academic Freedom”

Many universities are not adequately recognized for their positive efforts to promote and respect academic freedom and related values. The proposal is to develop a ranking system to allow these positive efforts to be certified by objective outside organizations, which will create positive pressure for further administrative recommendations and bring more attention to efforts to promote academic freedom. [Gigi Tevzadze, Ilia Chavchavadze State University]

Outcome: Committee formed to explore feasibility. Committee members include Gigi Tevzadze (ICSU); Vladimir Dounaev (EHU); Hoda Almutawah (Arab Society for Academic Freedom); Robert Quinn (SAR).

Proposal #9: International Moot Court Competition

There is a well-known International Moot Court Competition for law students. Every year the competition organizers invent a mock international case, which students then debate. The proposal is to ask the administrators to include an academic freedom related issue next year. This would encourage students/teachers in hundreds of universities around the world to discuss the particular case and academic freedom issues on a local and international level. [Anna Dolidze, Georgia, New York University School of Law].

Outcome: Approved. Committee established to develop formal proposal. Committee members include Anna Dolidze (Georgia); Gregory Prince (USA); Turgut Tarhanli (Turkey); Robert Quinn (SAR).

Additional proposals were presented for future consideration (arising too late for full discussion at the symposium):

Proposal #10: Intersection of quality and academic freedom/autonomy

In some places the major threat to higher education values is not violence or extreme restrictions but rather a lack of effective procedures or reforms that ensure high quality scholarship and education. The proposal is for SAR and its partners to develop activities which encourage a culture of quality/excellence within a framework of academic freedom and autonomy. [Yevhen Bystrytsky, International Renaissance Foundation]

Status: SAR to explore possible activities/partnerships.

Proposal #11: Engaging with host governments on visa issues

Aside from funding, sometimes one of the biggest challenges of hosting scholars is securing visas for them and their family members. The proposal is to explore ways SAR members might

develop lobbying or other relationships with the visa authorities of their respective countries, as a means of expediting visa applications. [Lauren Herman, Harvard University].

Status: SAR invites comments and suggestions.

Proposal #12: Sabbatical/other visits promoting academic freedom

In places where faculties, universities or entire higher education systems are under threat or otherwise lack full enjoyment of academic freedom and related values, long-and short-term visits from colleagues in other countries might provide valuable moral and intellectual support and example. The proposal is to explore ways to encourage scholars from SAR network member institutions and elsewhere to undertake solidarity visits while on sabbatical leave, research or teaching leave or other leaves. [Sarah Willcox, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund].

Status: SAR invites comments and suggestions.

Proposal #13: Explore ethical and cross-cultural basis for academic freedom

The terms ‘academic freedom’ and ‘institutional autonomy’ may not be familiar in all countries or may have different interpretations, but the underlying meanings resonate with many universal ethical principles, including for example in the concept of “*murūwa*,” an Arab ethical code of behavior. The proposal is to explore universal ethical and cultural principles which might reinforce contemporary appeals to academic freedom and autonomy. [Hoda Almutawah, Arab Society for Academic Freedom].

Status: SAR invites comments and suggestions.

Additional discussion points and questions arising during the plenary session included:

- Discussion on the role of EU integration, in particular the Bologna process, on higher education and academic freedom in Turkey.
- A suggestion that specific actions be added to the resolution on EHU.
- Advice to participants to enter into discussions with the Council of Europe in addition to the proposed discussions with UNESCO.

The symposium concluded at 7 pm with thanks to all participants. A closing dinner in the Old Town followed.



Symposium participants enjoy a nice evening in Vilnius Old Town

SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

15 July 2008

Esteemed colleagues:

On behalf of the Scholars at Risk Network and its partners, I call your attention to the attached resolution in support of the European Humanities University (EHU). We respectfully urge you join us in taking all reasonable activity in support of EHU and its continuing struggle for intellectual liberty in Europe.

As you may know, the European Humanities University is a university-in-exile, established for and by Belarusians in Lithuania following its forced closure in Belarus in 2004. Before and especially after its exile, EHU remains an important model of a new generation of higher education institutions, bridging the gap between past and future by promoting dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures, dialogue built around a liberal model of education and healthy respect for civil society. Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of scholars and universities committed to defending threatened universities and to promoting respect for academic freedom and related core higher education values. SAR is proud to support EHU in its pursuit of its goals and in its resistance to efforts to restrict or eliminate these values.

The resolution expresses the support of those assembled at a symposium celebrating EHU's 15th Anniversary, held this past 20-21 June 2008 in Vilnius, Lithuania on the theme of "*Defending the University: Academic Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe.*" It recognizes that without international support, EHU would never have reached their 15th anniversary. It further recognizes that the example of EHU remains so important, that it is necessary to disseminate the story of EHU widely and to invite higher education institutions everywhere, through their leadership, faculties and students; political leaders; donor organizations; members of the media; and the public generally to support EHU through all appropriate social, political and economic measures. We therefore share the resolution with you.

We invite your support for this important institution in whatever form you might be able to assist. We invite your response to this letter by writing to Scholars at Risk at scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu or faxing +1-212-994-4402, or by contacting EHU directly at office @ ehu.lt.

Sincerely,



Robert Quinn
Director
Scholars at Risk Network

Resolution in support of the European Humanities University

adopted by those assembled at the symposium “Defending the University: Academic Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe”, June 20-21, 2008, Vilnius, Lithuania, on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the European Humanities University and the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network

IN RECOGNITION of the 15th Anniversary of the European Humanities University (EHU); first established in 1992 in Minsk; forced into exile in 2004; and reestablished in Vilnius in 2005;

IN RECOGNITION of EHU’s goal of educating a new generation of professionals in the field of social sciences and humanities able to promote dialogue between Western and Eastern cultures, and to contribute to civil society in Belarus based on the values of European civilization;

IN RECOGNITION of EHU’s strong commitment to liberal education, and to fundamental higher education values including academic freedom, institutional autonomy, accountability, quality and transparency;

IN RECOGNITION of EHU’s importance as a model for university communities everywhere of an effective resistance to efforts to undermine liberal education and to restrict or eliminate these higher education values; including as a host for many threatened scholars;

IN RECOGNITION of the leadership of EHU, including its Governing Board and Senate and Rector Anatoli Mikhailov, and their dedication to keeping EHU not only operating but thriving as a model of quality higher education;

IN RECOGNITION of the faculty and students of EHU, for their commitment to the mission of the university and the sacrifices they have made to maintain their teaching, research and studies; and

IN RECOGNITION of the donors whose support has been invaluable in allowing EHU to maintain its operations and present a model for other institutions and societies;

IT IS RESOLVED, by those assembled today that the international higher education community, and its constituent institutions, leadership, faculties and students; political leaders and institutions; donor organizations; and the public generally, should be encouraged to recognize EHU and support it through appropriate social, political and economic measures, as they may individually or collectively determine; and

It is further RESOLVED that those assembled today, when returning to their respective countries and institutions, should disseminate the story of EHU, and this resolution, as a model of commitment to higher education, including throughout the international membership of the Scholars at Risk Network, and encourage further actions in support of EHU and fundamental higher education values.

Presented and approved for circulation, 21 June 2008

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