

**“Scholar Rescue in the Modern World” Book Party – January 25, 2010**  
**Draft Speech Outline (1/21/10 Draft)**

Thank you, Tom.

Daniela Kaisth and I wrote “Scholar Rescue in the Modern World” to help you and, even more important, to help us understand what the Scholar Rescue Fund—which we call SRF among friends—has been doing and what we have learned over the past eight years since it was formed.

Let’s start with a little history. As most of you know, SRF is a part of the Institute for International Education, a non-profit organization devoted to the promotion of international education and understanding. Although IIE’s primary mission is to implement international exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program, the Institute has repeatedly stepped in to rescue students and scholars in trouble throughout the world since its founding in 1919.

Scholars think and speak the truth and so they are often the first to feel the jackboot of history and the first tyrants want to get rid of. The Bolshevik Revolution, Mussolini’s Italy, Nazi Germany, the Hungarian Uprising, Tiananmen Square and more were all coupled with scholar oppression. In each case, IIE helped to rescue those who got in trouble. But when we riffled through the history of these rescues, we saw that, in each great crisis, precious time to save scholarly lives was wasted while the world dithered about what to do

Henry Kaufman who was, back then, IIE’s Chairman, and I came to talk about this delay and concluded that we could speed up our communities’ response by having a rescue organization in place when the next disaster struck—sort of like have tents in place in Port-au-Prince before the next earthquake in Haiti. Dr. Kaufman knew that I, like he, was a former academic and that I had been a narrowly-escaping refugee. He knew that if he asked me to manage it, it would be easy for me to say yes, which I did.

My heart might have been in the right place but I had no idea how to start. And so, like everyone does, I turned to Allan Goodman, IIE’s President, for his blessing and advice, Allan said we should first establish an endowment fund of perhaps five or ten million dollars to support this activity because it would naturally be a big disappointment if we started and then had to stop because we couldn’t raise enough money.

I wanted to get going and so I told him about the conference that Franklin Roosevelt had called in Evian France in 1937, soon after the Nazis started to fire, exile and generally make life unbearable for its Jews. Roosevelt had invited the foreign ministers of fifty or sixty countries to Evian to discuss the problem.

The conference was surprisingly well attended, and speaker after speaker got up and said that they were enthusiastically in support of the wonderful President’s wonderful initiative but that, as the conference delegates surely knew, in their particular country just in this particular year there had been an agricultural disaster which made it impossible for them to accept any additional people. The next got up and said it was his country’s imminent elections, others said it was their country’s economic situation, in still others it was political problems which made it impossible, even though the ruler, him or herself, fully agreed with the wonderful President’s wonderful initiative.

Then the representative of the Dominican Republic got up. His President, Rafael Trujillo, was known as “The Butcher of Santo Domingo” because, in behavior reminiscent of the problems of today, he had

ordered his army to machine-gun thousands of Haitians who were trying to get across the border. To everyone's surprise, the representative said that he had the honor to inform the group that His Excellency President Trujillo offered to take into the Dominican Republic 100,000 Middle Europeans and to do so without any conditions. Some people later thought he did it to cleanse his reputation; others said he was a racist who thought it would be good for his country's people to be enhanced by "white genes."

No matter the reason. It was an electrifying moment for the conference and for the world whose relief organizations promptly set to work. Their first task was to set up committees to study the question of how many of each occupational group should be chosen, how many merchants, how many academics, how many laborers and factory workers, and the like. In addition, one needed to decide on the optimal age groups and the right mix of families and singles. These deliberations took 12 to 18 months and by late 1938 all the careful decisions had been made, and the interviews were started. They got under way in early 1939—with the Nazis helping by concentrating the interviewees in none-too-comfortable "camps" but by September of 1939, war broke out and they were stopped.

In the intervening two years, only 900 Jews were chosen for resettlement in the Dominican Republic, largely to a small town called Sosua, where they stayed, at least for the duration of the war. Sadly, over 99,000 Jews who could have come were not even evaluated. They remained behind in Hitler's inferno, and most of them were presumably swallowed up by it.

I got through with my story; Allan took my arm and said, "Let's start today, endowment or not."

And so – we Just Got Started, which is the first of the practical principles we have developed to guide our modern scholar rescue efforts.

We thought we were setting up an organization that could be ready when the next big drama came. And we thought we'd get practice by circularizing the world's universities and human rights organizations, get a few applications now and then, and that that way we'd learn how to handle them for the next Big One. After all, there weren't more than a few such cases of jail, kidnapping, violence, firing a year? That's all we had seen till we started to look. Wow! Were we wrong! In our first five years, we received over 1000 applications (847 fully filled out) from more than 100 countries. The level of demand for scholar rescue greatly surprised all of us, including George Soros, one of our seed funders.

Since then we've developed a Board, two Selection Committees, a number of willing university hosts here and abroad, a dedicated and competent staff, a method, and, thank goodness, some funders like the Lounsbury Foundation, the State Department, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and we've rescued over 300 scholars. Once we started to act, we came to develop principles and insights. To understand those principles and insights, i.e., we wanted to look at what we were doing and Carnegie generously offered to fund our study. This book is the result.

"Scholar Rescue in the Modern World," the book we're celebrating today, analyzes the 847 applications from 101 countries that we got in our first five years and the 140 scholars from 38 countries who were chosen for support.

The book also outlines some practical principles we discovered, once we embraced our "Just Get Started" principle:

- a. The first has to do with the way we choose: Board Member George Rupp identified an important principle: “Short of mendacity or violence, make scholarship and danger the only criteria for choosing a scholar.”
- b. The second has to do with how we place them: Prince bin-Talal of Jordan who, with his wife, SRF Board Member Princess Ghida, has been one of our staunchest supporters, told us early on: “The better the scholars you bring, the more scholars you will thereafter be able to place.”
- c. Then comes the fund-raising imperative Board Member Tom Russo devised: “Ask everyone you meet, on the street or at your club or work for money.”
- d. Another one concerns placement: “Place scholars in countries near their homes both to keep them comfortable and to ensure their early return.”

There are many more but those give you some idea.

In preparing the book, Daniela and I, with the help of our Board, came gradually to better identify what mission and goals our actions were subsuming.

### **Mission and Goals**

- **Scholar Rescue Fund Philosophy:** We believe that freedom of scholarship is a fundamental right and that it is essential to fostering knowledge and progress towards peace and prosperity in the world.
- **Scholar Rescue Fund Mission:** To rescue scholars and, by protecting their lives and work, to increase their country’s and the world’s level of academic knowledge.

What we are presenting today is perhaps the first book of a trilogy. It shows what we have learned about data-gathering and reflects a lot on the countries and conditions in which life-threatening scholar oppression takes place.

A second book should focus more on the scholars’ stories, both while under oppression and even before. It can perhaps identify what oppressed scholars have in common: what turns a scholar into an oppressed scholar or even into a dissident?

A final volume should assess the impact of what we are doing, and this will in turn force us to develop metrics for our mission.

## **Metrics of the SRF Mission could include:**

- a. Number of scholars placed in host universities where they can work in freedom/safety
- b. Educational Output
  - (1) The number of students taught in succeeding 5- and 10-year periods
  - (2) Supervision of doctoral candidates and of all post-graduate students
  - (3) Student evaluations of the refugee scholars' performance
- c. Scholarly Output
  - (1) Refereed journal publications in succeeding 5- and 10-year periods
  - (2) Books published
  - (3) Citations in field
  - (4) Cross-field citations
  - (5) Participation in academic conferences

To return to our discussion of today's book, however, we describe in it what we have learned about data-gathering and on what the data can teach us, country-by-country, about causes and correlations.

We learned that countries with a low GDP and a low percentage of academics respect their scholars less and oppress them more. We learned that failed states produce 27 times as many applicants as others do, and that scholars (and probably everyone else) want to leave countries racked by conflict and violence.

We also learned that absolute numbers of SRF applicants and grantees mean less than those numbers as a percentage of the sending country's academic population.

This led us to what is perhaps the book's key metric: the Academic Oppression Index, which is simply the number of SRF applicants from a particular country divided by that country's academic population. This metric ranges from 0 in the case of countries without applicants to a high like that in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 5% of whose scholars have applied to us for rescue.

For example, when we crunch the absolute numbers, we see that 61% of applicants and 73% of grantees come from just two world regions: Africa and the Middle East. But by sheer number of applicants a country may look as if it were rife with scholar persecution just because it is big. Are China, Russia, or India really problem children or do they just have the most academics?

When we do our AOI analysis, we realize that the truly "hot" countries are not only confined to Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, but, in the first five years of SRF activity, they constitute just 3 countries: Iraq, Iran, and Ethiopia.

Among the top 10 applicant countries, the numbers from China and India are not really a big deal, considering their academic population. By contrast, Iraq and the West Bank/Gaza appear to be at a severe point of crisis and up to 5% of the academic population of the DRC has applied to the Scholar Rescue Fund for emergency support between 2002 and 2007.

I'm looking forward to Volume 3, in which we will try to identify the impacts and outcomes of our program. So far, we've rescued 334 scholars from 42 countries and placed them in over 180 schools in

35 countries. To the members of our hard-working Selection Committees, who read some 300 pages of data before every meeting, that represents lives, freedom from jail, scholarship, human dignity, and tortured academic families saved.

If one could measure scholarly output in learning terms, we could say that it represents a pragmatic benefit, too. If a scholar provides 500 to 1000 hours a year of teaching and research and if each of these scholars still has, say, 10-15 years of a working life before him, and if each class or research work addresses 20 to 30 hours of learning time and its reverberations, we have enabled many millions of hours of learning.

Hrs/yr of Teaching or Research	Remaining Productive Years		Ave Class or Research prod Audience (hrs)	# of Rescued Scholars	=	World Learning Contribution Of Rescued Scholars
500 – 1000	10 – 15	X	20-50	334	=	3.4 million – 250 million

So we have come to the point where, with IIE’s help, we know how to do it, how and where to raise the money to do it, what to measure and how to show it, and what rescued scholars need, in terms not only of safety but also of dignity but we are still trying to learn how to transform our everyday efforts to relieve the chronic oppression of autocracy into the crash rescue effort that marked our work in Italy, Germany, and now Iraq.

Back in the Thirties we rescued only the best scholars in Europe, perhaps the world. A disproportionate number of them, then or later, had received Nobel Prizes. Are we trying to do that today? I don’t think so. If we were, we would have to wait till Europe and America oppress scholars. So, no. The fact that we are rescuing the best scholars in their country or that part of world suffices to give not only the scholars but also ourselves some dignity and to ensure, even in less-evolved parts of the world that they can develop a free professoriate.

We need also to focus on the kind of staff we need.

- Eight years ago, we started with one person – our first Executive Director Rob Quinn – and lots of help from IIE’s Development office, which at the time was led by Julian Johnson.
- Today, we have grown to a staff of more than 10 people, including personnel in New York, DC, Cairo, and Jordan. SRF is expertly led by Executive Director Jim Miller, Deputy Director Sarah Willcox, and Director of the Iraq Project Nada Al-Soze. We are very fortunate to have them and our other staff, and we are very fortunate that Allan Goodman and Daniela Kaisth help to guide and oversee it as well. We now have two Selection Committees, the Global Committee and a separate one for Iraq alone—which has developed a robust program and with the help of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan rescued over 200 Iraqi scholars in response to the 2006 cry for help expressed by His Excellency Abid Al Ajeeli, Iraq’s Minister of Higher Education. We also have a Board of about a dozen dedicated volunteers.
- We are extremely fortunate to have the staff and leadership that we have. They are exactly what is needed to rescue scholars: a team of smart, hard-working, and modest people working very hard each and every day, including evenings and weekends. I don’t think it takes a village to rescue scholars, I think it takes a family. It takes team members who feel like family to find scholar

families apartments, schools for their children, and orientation to the U.S., friendship, in short, someone to turn to. I wish we had 20 volunteers to help us with that.

- We are lucky to have an “extended” family of committed individuals, organizations, and institutions to make our program a success. I want to briefly introduce you to two key supporters who are here with us tonight.
  - Dr. Edward Guiliano is President of the New York Institute of Technology. Thanks to his leadership, NYIT’s Amman campus hosts meetings of our Iraq Visiting Scholar Association, including videoconference links between our staff in New York, DC, Amman, and Baghdad. NYIT also hosts our Iraq Visiting Scholar Lecture Series, in which we make e-Learning videos for distribution in Iraq and other parts of the Arab world.
  - Dr. Arien Mack is a legendary professor of psychology at the New School who has made possible a collaborative program – now in its second year – in which the New School hosts an SRF scholar every year. This has reinvigorated the 70-year-old scholar rescue partnership we formed in the Nazi oppression of the Thirties.
- Every time I think about how much our staff, our volunteers, and the rest of our extended family do, I feel grateful, both on my behalf and on behalf of the scholars and their families, the institutions from which the scholars come and those in which we place them. I feel grateful on behalf of the countries which may oppress them today but will surely need them tomorrow, and the other scholars of the world who can not only learn from our scholars’ teaching and work but will also feel safer and freer to speak because SRF exists.

Finally – we need to answer this question: How can we get you to help us?

As you might imagine, I have some ideas.

As the crisis in Iraq has shown, big academic dramas still do arise on a periodic basis. And the need for our everyday work also continues to be urgent. And, try as we and other human rights organizations know, things are not getting better. Freedom House’s annual report on Freedom in the World 2010 tells us:

*For the fourth consecutive year, global declines in freedom outweighed gains in 2009. This represents the longest continuous period of decline for global freedom in the 40-year history of the report. Declines for freedom were registered in 40 countries representing 20 percent of the world’s total population. Iran, Russia, Venezuela, and Vietnam became more repressive as did other authoritarian regimes that have become more influential and uncompromising.”*

All this leads us to conclude that scholar rescue is a growth industry. If somebody other than our supporters paid for it, we could do an IPO and sell shares.

Unfortunately, our funding sources, especially our philanthropic sources, are in trouble. We have been able to quickly raise large amounts of emergency funding for Iraq, but we are inundated with requests for assistance from Iran, Gaza, Pakistan, DRC, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe.

I am very glad to see here tonight many new friends of the Scholar Rescue Fund. I am especially glad to welcome members of the New York Chapter of the Fulbright Association. We are fortunate that Fulbright is a part of our efforts – that the Institute can rely in part upon Fulbright networks to spread the word about SRF and can turn to the thousands of schools in the IIE network to place our scholars. We hope that all of you will become new friends of the Scholar Rescue Fund. Help us find money, leave bequests to us that will save you and your family money, and contact Margot to donate some time to our work. Ten hours a week would be good but five hours may also be a help.

In closing, I quote an article that IIE's first President, Stephen Duggan, wrote in 1939 called "An Appeal for Displaced Spanish Scholars." In it, he said:

"It was inevitable that whichever side won, among the first to suffer would be the university professor, in most cases a non-political person immersed in his subject and having no desire to become involved. Today the most distinguished scholars can be without resources; they and their families may be thrown upon the philanthropy of others."

This is what happened during the Spanish Civil War, as it has in so many other places and as it does today in Iraq.

Duggan concludes by describing how the Institute, a pioneer in such efforts, is trying to help and ends with the appeal: "The Committee will need money to carry on and will be glad to receive gifts for this cause."

More than 70 years later, I say it again: we, too, would be glad to receive gifts for this cause.

Thank you, and Good Night.