

Young Leaders Dialogue with America Conference – Spread the Word about ‘Us’

Prague, November 2010

John Vince officially opened the long desired and anxiously anticipated Young Leaders Dialogue (YLD) Conference that took place from 8th till 12th November in the Prague Marriot Hotel in the centre of the Czech capital on Tuesday. The evening welcome reception on Monday was attended by some very important guests, such as Joseph Pennington, Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Prague; Jeffery Jamison, member of office of the Public Diplomacy at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and many others. The entire reception consisted of different presentations, such as the reason for organizing the YLD conference in Prague, goals of the conference, desires and expectations of participants of the YLD conference and the enormous gathering and discussion among young participants. The conference program was divided into three days with 8 key-note sessions, 18 dialogue sessions and 4 group projects workshops, where participants could choose from a variety of very interesting topics.

The Young Leaders Dialogue with America program¹ (YLDA) is sponsored by the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE). YLDA provides strategic opportunities for emerging leaders from Central Europe and the Baltic States and their U.S. counterparts to discuss issues of mutual concern. The program connects young leaders from European countries² with young leaders from across the United States to exchange ideas and information as it relates to three ‘dialogue’ themes: New Challenges in Transatlantic Security, Climate Change and Environmental Issues, and Tolerance and Diversity. Vince explained the goals of

1 *The YLDA program was launched in February 2010 with a two-week U.S. Study Tour for 47 young European leaders. The study tour included meetings with a range of experts, professionals, and students; interactive and professional networking events; and cultural opportunities reflecting the diversity of America. The YLD conference in Prague is a follow up to the February 2010 U.S. Study Tour that brought together 200 young leaders from Central Europe, the Baltic States, and the United States to engage one another on issues related to new challenges in transatlantic security, the environment and climate change, and tolerance and diversity. The goal of the Prague Conference was to bring together young leaders to continue dialogue on issues related to the above mentioned themes that were presented by keynote speakers. Therefore, the YLD Conference agenda comprised several opportunities for meaningful interaction and exchange and included participation at professional development workshops and engagement in cross-disciplinary panel discussions across the three dialogue themes (<http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/Young-Leaders-Dialogue-with-America/Conference-in-Prague>).*

2 *Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.*

YLDA and said that it is important to have constant dialogue and to talk about the occurring issues, because although it seems that we are very similar, there are some characteristics (cultural, educational, political, etc.) in which we still differ. In his opinion, we are a group of young leaders that will be meeting and cooperating for the next 30 years or more on the same or on the opposite sides of the negotiation table.

After Vince's welcome to all participants of the YLD, Nancy Overholt, IIE executive director, passed her welcome and introduced the first two speakers at the opening penal session entitled Climate Change and Environmental Issues. Professor Vaclav Cilek and Joel Rubin talked about their viewpoints on the present environmental and climate issues. Cilek stressed that contemporary society is facing ongoing environmental and climate changes and the related activities, but not enough discussion is focused on the responsibilities and tasks of all involved nations. Global society has different views and opinions of occurring issues, no matter if it is about global warming, the economic crisis, crime, population growth, food problem and starvation, energy resources, diseases etc., From the positive point of aspect, this means that we are living in a world 'full of challenges'. Unfortunately, the scarcity of food and oil³ will in the future eventually influence politics more than countries would like to. Cilek concluded with the suggestion that young leaders should think about the ways and possibilities to change and overcome the water, food, diversity and other challenges. Rubin talked about the issue of climate change and spoke in favor of the facts that testify about global warming. As his colleague before him, he also invited participants to think about possible solutions which will enable the settlement of already exposed occurring problems and issues. He stopped at the fact that challenges are not isolated; on the contrary, they are connected and intertwined. Therefore, one has to be aware that security challenges are interrelated with environmental challenges and both groups of challenges are interrelated with economic challenges etc.

After the opening penal, six dialogue sessions⁴ took place at the same time. Timothy Westmyer was coordinator of the dialogue session *Global Non-Proliferation: The Role of European Union and Russia in the Road Map for the Future*. Petra Kuchynkova and Joel Rubin discussed the still important security issues of nuclear weapons. Kuchynkova stressed that relations between Russia, European countries and some other countries are changing, especially in the last decade. They are mostly motivated by economic policy and development relations. On the other side, the World is facing the changing relations and disagreements between

3 Cilek noticed that every society needs a certain amount of critical elements to feel unified (i.e., climate change issue in Europe). When dealing with these issues, Western countries are rich and well developed, even have new technologies prepared, and are capable to survive the crisis in comparison with poor countries. Poor countries will be thrown in social anarchism, food fights and riots, religious extremism. Deriving from said, the crucial question is, how to 'help' the poor countries, although they do not want to be helped (are insulted and embarrassed).

4 Participants could choose from the following topics: *Creating Businesses that are Profitable and Environmentally Sustainable; Environmental Legislative Reform: Building Political Will and Public Support; Promoting Tolerance and Diversity through Music, Art, and Film; Non-Violent Social Movements: Effective Action against Prejudice and Discrimination; Russia in NATO – Fiction or Necessity; Global Non-Proliferation: The Role of EU and Russia in the Road Map for the Future.*

Russia and some other countries (Georgia, Latvia, etc.) that are described as a crisis of relations among Russia and European Union (EU). EU members are still facing improvement of the economic cooperation and relations but the security relations and cooperation remains low. In 2009, President Medvedev released the proposal of a new European security agreement where Russian ambitions and European security issues and needs were combined. Furthermore, the suspension of the U.S. missile defense project abated the growing security tensions and nowadays the question of Russian participation in NATO-territory projects is occurring. Therefore, the year 2010 represents a new start for the EU-Russia partnership for modernization and other additional cooperation possibilities with Russia (i.e., Russian participation in the offered negotiations in EU3 + 3). Rubin spoke about the American approach to non-proliferation that was very clearly presented in the speech of president Obama in Prague in 2010 in 6 very short and evident points. U.S. is more or less efficiently performing the set goals about non-proliferation. Among these planned solutions and changes, a new positive cooperation with Russia is one of the most important and desired from the both sides, therefore a new cooperation agreement between U.S. and Russia is in the process of being adopted. The U.S. approach is oriented on the global aspect but in the background national security stays the main issue; therefore cooperation and the desired agreement are exposed. All this raises a question of the division of power among the leading world countries (does the agreement among both leaders means more power for U.S., more power for Russia or both). Apart from the discussion but connected to non-proliferation, green criminologists raised questions about control over the nuclear weapon pieces and above all of the crucial components (nuclear material). Nuclear 'waste' trafficking is just one of the organized environmental crime forms but definitely the most dangerous one.

The afternoon work started with the *Workshop on Social Entrepreneurship - Transforming Ideas into Action*, managed by Susie Lawrence. She exposed the importance of the knowing about the third sector that is situated between the private and the public sector, explained the definition of social enterprise⁵ and passed the broad description of the social enterprise production system. Social enterprises are active in the field of empowering communities, enabling the voluntary sector to improve sustainability, improving local public service delivery, addressing market issues and empowering consumers and workers. In Lawrence's opinion social enterprises are very important also in the field of security, environmental issues, and tolerance and diversity issues. Lawrence's workshop was the introduction to group work. YLD participants were divided in 18 different groups⁶ and had 3 Group

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- 5 *Social enterprises are organizations that apply market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose. Their movement includes both non-profits that use business models to pursue their mission and for-profits whose primary purposes are social. They often cover the social, environmental or economic field and that way help the 'weak' people from the community.*
 - 6 *Advancing Joint Efforts on Trans-Atlantic activities 1 and 2; Raising Environmental Awareness and Reaching Broader Audiences through Film and Art; Developing Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Responsible Businesses; Promoting Military Cooperation for Peace and Conflict Resolution; Interfaith and Cross-Cultural Dialogue Sowing Seeds of Understanding; Developing a Euro-Atlantic Network of Security Experts and Research; Promoting Tolerance and Diversity through Technology and Social Media; IDEAS (F)actory: Harnessing Unique Ideas for Climate*

Project Meetings⁷, where they were encouraged to prepare a project proposal and apply for a 90,000 \$ grant that has been offered by the U.S. State Department.

The second conference working day begun with a keynote session that had two topics; *Why Security Matters* and *Threats Influencing the Transatlantic Area*. Firstly, James P. Rubin talked about the issue of security, which is as much a national as it is a global problem, and differs only according to different shapes at different levels. On the everyday basis, merely regional or national troubles seems small in comparison to major global issues, but not so long ago the threat of war was present in Europe and it is only a decade ago the U.S. were attacked and their security network was heavily damaged. In Rubin's opinion the Balkan war and the Kosovo independent issue were very important for the U.S. and were intensively observed and followed by the U.S. government all the time and even influenced at some crucial security points. These experiences are very important for nowadays/ the current situation/today and future generations that will decide about their (our) security when responding to a possible catastrophe that we have to think about the present moment (about now). Secondly, Andor Sandor talked about present security threats and stressed that the U.S. and Europe security threats and their location were very similar. A common security threat in the trans-Atlantic area is definitely terrorism, although it is still important how one defines it⁸. Furthermore, Sandor is sure that even in last decade the form and way of Al Qaida's operations changed dramatically and security services do not know how to deal with military organized and equipped groups. Their modus operandi are highly sophisticated and modern due the perfect reorganization and possibility of money gathering and consequent training and equipment funding. Sandor stressed that each day round 5000 different Islam web pages appear in the cyber space inviting possible terrorists to join their program and follow the set goals of terrorist attacks in different countries all over the world. Only a decade ago, the military intelligence service all over the world had few or no experts capable to read, speak and write Arabic languages. Intelligence services all over the world were powerless and had to adapt to the emerging security threat very quickly. Sandor is sure that security really matters in Europe, although many security standards and goals are written on paper but not implemented in practice. Especially nowadays countries do not

Change Mitigation and Adaptation; Volunteerism as a Tool for Advancing Tolerance and Strengthening Youth Communities; Exploring and Defining the Future of NATO; Solving Climate Change through Innovation and Leadership; Bringing Together the Leaders of Tomorrow with the Leaders of Today; Environmental Education: Teaching the Next Generation to Live Sustainably; Defining 'European' in a Post-Communist Era – Integrating Eastern Europe; Using Film to Raise Awareness about Tolerance Issues in Europe and the United States; Media and the Press: Cross-Dialogue Themes; and Non-Violent Social Movements: Supporting Young Activists Fighting against Discrimination.

- 7 The participation in the 11 member group named *Environmental Education: Teaching the Next Generation to Live Sustainably* preparing the project proposal was a very interesting experience of changing dynamics in group work that resulted in the project proposal of a travelling exhibition of photos of good environmental protection practices through all project partners countries accompanied with lectures and other events.
- 8 I.e., Al Qaida was once known as a nationalist movement party and at some point in the history became a terrorist group.

wish to depend on energy resources from other countries (i.e., Russia, Germany), whose resources can easily become a terrorist targets.

The afternoon of the second YLD conference day offered two sets of 6 different dialogue sessions⁹. The panel titled Transnational Crimes: Drugs and Human Trafficking. Three experts, Alena Horakova, Irena Konecna and Olga Sifferova presented their work on human and drug trafficking. First, they described their work and then showed a short movie to bring the discussed topic more closely to the audience. Trafficking in human beings (THB) is present in the Czech Republic in similar forms as all over the world. Orakova believes it is hard to fight organized crime groups, whose networks are flexible, invisible and extremely hard to define. These groups are motivated by large profits sustained by a strong illegal market, their forces involved are of global nature and they defy traditional crime responses. She stressed that 5Ps (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Punishment and Partnership/Promotion of collateral responses) could be an efficient strategy to fight against THB. In continuation, Sifferova presented a program of support and protection for victims of THB. She exposed the example of good practice where cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior (Crime Prevention Department) and two non-governmental organizations offers positive results and proves the statement 'Prevention Pays!'. With this positive experience and with a positive approach they are partner in the Transnational Referral Mechanisms for victims of trafficking between countries of origin and destination. Konecna emphasized that the most understanding and logical definition of human trafficking notes that *human trafficking* is the *movement* of people by means of *coercion* for the purpose of *exploitation*¹⁰. In the Czech Republic, human trafficking for the purposes of domestic labor increased in the last five years. The speakers agree that raising public awareness concerning human trafficking is very important.

The second day of the conference was concluded with the movie of Aman Ali and Bossam Tariq entitled *30 Mosques in 30 Days: An American Road trip Adventure*, which showed how little sometimes is necessary to overcome the multicultural differences and prejudice, mostly based on unjustified fear, causing undesired violence and intolerance.

The last day of the conference begun with the penal entitled *Chipping Away at Intolerance in America*, where Robert Johnson and Wayne Drash from CNN were

9 In the first group of panels the following topics were covered: *Green Technologies: An Opportunity for Collaboration, Innovation, and Changes*; *Environmental Literacy: Education for Sustainable Development*; *Multicultural Societies: Inclusion and Integration*; *Interfaith Dialogue: Advancing Tolerance, Promoting Peace*; *Addressing Failed and Failing States: Transatlantic Cooperation and Diplomacy*; and *Transnational Crimes: Drugs and Human Trafficking*. The second group of panels included: *Climate Change, Poverty, and Justice*; *Transatlantic Relations in a Post-Community Europe*; *Conflict and Energy Security*; *Technology, Social Media, and Creative Messaging for Social Change*; *Volunteerism and Social Change*; and *Balancing Security and Human Rights*.

10 *Forms of THB combine forced labour/exploitation in sex industry, other industries, domestic work, and context of marriage, begging and petty crimes, and removal of organs. THB is a complex phenomenon that combines human rights, gender, labour, migration and criminal issues. La Strada International (European Network against Trafficking in Human Beings) sees THB as a phenomenon and as a continuum (dynamic process) which incorporates the process of actions that begins with bad working conditions, frauds, continuous with serious forms of exploitations and ends as a trafficking in human beings.*

talking about their experiences with slavery of black people in the U.S., its cruelty and consequences¹¹. They passed their message to young leaders to confront problems, learn from them, tackle them and lead on civil dialogue, because this is, in their opinion, the real path to success and progress. The second panel, entitled *90 Minutes with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Program Focus: Chechnya and Human Rights* was started by Jeff Gedmin, who exposed the importance of free press and stressed the dangerous conditions in which even nowadays reporters all over the world have to work. Gedmin passed the word to the next three speakers about violations of human rights in Chechnya, Jaromin Stetina, Brian Whitemore and Josef Pazderka. Statina is the author of the documentary film, shown at the panel, that was made in Grozny and showed the dark side of the war in 1999 and 2000, where the reporters faced a complete media embargo and manipulation of released information from Russia. Even after 10 years, when lots of people believe that war and attacks are over, but in reality political, ecological and economical terror against the Chechnya population continues. The fighting is still going on and the speakers were asking where this is leading and when this will end. Because in the background, the main reason for all this military fighting in Chechnya and Georgia is the 'Kaspic pipeline' (gas and oil resources war).

After the Plenary closing session with group project reports the closing remarks about the YLD in Prague 2010 was led by Judith A. McHale, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. She emphasized that Europe and America have to work together when dealing with 21st century threats such as piracy, cyber attacks, economic crisis, security issues, environmental threats and diversity barriers. The cooperation of young leaders for solving present tremendous challenges comes first and the leaders have to use all possible tools to take the dialogue opened in Prague beyond the walls and borders. She repeated several times during the conference that global issues are our joint problems. All countries have the responsibilities and have to tackle the national and global issues, because we share the future and with it share the challenges and responsibilities. A change in mentality must occur to enable other solutions in the field of transatlantic security, climate change, environmental issues, tolerance and diversity and elsewhere to really work. One is dealing with multidisciplinary challenges where cooperation is often unavoidable and demands involvement of all possible levels and groups, from state leaders through NGO's to scholars.

The YLD conference in Prague increased the participants' knowledge and understanding of common Trans-Atlantic issues through dialogue with American and European peers, experts, and thought-leaders; promoted strong transatlantic leadership through collaboration and partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding; created lasting connections among all participants; facilitated the development of collaborative group projects and increased mutual understanding among young leaders from the United States and Europe. Besides that, the YLD conference offered a chance to get to know young leaders from Slovenia that are active in the field of security, environmental, tolerance and diversity. The strong

¹¹ *In the presentation stories about like pieces of furniture sold black slaves all over the country were shown and described. Even now, in the 21st century, the colour intolerance and hidden violence is still very much alive, witnessed and experienced even by CNN reporters.*

bond and understanding among them was created that signifies good cooperation and future joint projects for better (more friendly) tomorrow. They are aware that the time what we will do with our future and for our future has come, therefore it is necessary to work together and stay connected while taking the dialogue to action. We have to (try to) think beyond the limits, to think the unthinkable in positive sense, in sense of ideas for future that has not been tried yet, starting from local or regional to national and global level. We have to react and act sustainably and security responsible to enable the future for the next generations.

Besides that, the YLD conference offered a chance to get to know young leaders from Slovenia that are active in the above-mentioned fields. A strong bond and understanding among us was created and opens the doors for good cooperation and future joint projects for a better (friendlier) tomorrow. We are aware that the time for what we will do with our future and for our future has come, therefore it is necessary to work together and stay connected while taking the dialogue to action. We have to (try to) think beyond the limits/out of the box, to think the unthinkable in positive sense, in the sense of ideas for the future that have not been tried yet, starting at the local or regional and reaching towards the national and global level. We have to react and act sustainably and responsibly in terms of security in order to enable a future for the next generations.

Katja Eman