

ЕЎРАПЕЙСКИ ГУМАНІТАРНЫ УНІВЕРСІТЭТ
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY

NEW
HISTORY

15
years



CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Chapter 1. EHU is an “Esoteric community”	7
Chapter 2. EHU is a classical University	18
Interlude: Closing of the University in Belarus	29
Chapter 3. EHU is a network University	48
Conclusion	63

It is so difficult and seems almost impossible to recreate the atmosphere and the feeling of the time when the idea to create European Humanities University emerged.

We have to admit that we were, apparently, fearless idealists. As far as I know, nobody in and outside Belarus ever undertook any attempt to found a private university, which would not be financed out of public funds and which would make its life difficult with disciplines that are so "non-marketable" and so far from pragmatic interests as philosophy, theology, art, psychology, and political sciences ...

Thereby, from the very beginning we became vulnerable from the financial point of view and quite dependent on the support from the outside. Yes, during that period our initiative was perceived in our country as prospective and promising and, consequently, many influential state bodies found it possible to be co-founders of the university. It was hardly flawless in regard of the observance of existing legal formalities, but the necessity to create a higher educational institution, essentially different in its character that focused on familiarizing students with values of European culture, seemed to be taken for granted. Nevertheless, it was mainly moral and political support which could not provide for our physical existence in any way.

We realized that in the circumstances developed after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the Republic of Belarus was not at all an oasis on the intellectual map of the world, especially in the sphere of humanities and social disciplines because of the long years of domination of totalitarian ideology that significantly complicated familiarization with the fundamental values of world civilization. However, during a very short time of its existence EHU seemed to manage to do the impossible. Unique curricula, conferences, and publications promoted the transformation of our university into one of the most attractive educational institutions of Belarus. We were recognized and supported by various foreign funds, governmental and international bodies. EHU became known far outside our country.

It was far more difficult for us to exist in the conditions of not a very benevolent attitude to this undertaking on the part of the local professional community.

The staff of the department of history of philosophy and logics of the Belarusian State University became the kernel of the group that initiated the establishment of the university. It seemed that new times had come; at the same time it turned out that the situation with social sciences, which had developed in this educational institution, could not be reformed. However, our transfer to the Academy of Sciences (first to the Institute of Philosophy and Law and then after being ousted from it to the department at the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences) did not make our life easier. Our last shelter was a temporary scientific team at the Institute of Professional Development at the Belarusian State University, but its financing came to an end two years later.

We had always been homeless and depended on a number of circumstances and factors, but no matter how difficult our existence was, it seemed that difficulties and hardships made us only stronger. Other times came, and what only recently had seemed so obvious, urgent and vitally important began to be perceived with growing malevolence. Inspections motivated by hardly hidden bias became more frequent. All kinds of our activities were checked up and "examined" with extreme thoroughness. However, all the efforts to reveal our shortcomings could not bring the desired results. Then they tried to make use of the traditional device: "ideological work is badly organized".



Rector A. Mikhailov



A. Mikhailov accepts the first books for the EHU library

In the autumn of 2003 came the warning signal from the newly appointed minister of education who said at the meeting of the country's rectors of higher educational establishments that "... the university is good and strong, but why invite so many foreign teachers? Do not we have our own ones?" It was like a bolt from the blue.

It is difficult to imagine that somewhere else in the civilized world it might be possible to reproach for what is actually the proof of recognition and high quality. Science and education exist everywhere and always in the required conditions of their close integration into the life of the world professional community.

In February, 2004 a meeting with the Minister of Education took place. Outwardly an affable and benevolent tone. At the same time the insistent recommendation follows: I have to resign at my own will.

I have time after time thought of it myself. In no way did I want to be a burden on the university or a barrier on the way to preserve it. However, behind all of this one could see a hardly hidden desire to transform the university, to deprive it of its identity, and to turn it into a standardized controllable structure.

Apparently, the final decision had already been made by then. Nothing helped. Neither appeals of the foreign professional community nor the ambassadors' protests nor attempts to establish communication with the people who had been entrusted with the realization of this decision. What happened later could hardly be described in terms of elementary common sense. The closing of the university was carried out in a brutal way, infringing basic norms and rules. By this act, which is unprecedented for the 21st century, the country's authorities brought an irreparable damage to the country's prestige. Belarus began to be called "the country in which universities get closed".

It was simply impossible to reconcile with what had been created by the selfless efforts of the whole staff.

So EHU was revived in another country, which is close to all of us through our long joint history, but which lives quite a different life at present. Lithuania's hospitality and the support of the international community became the decisive factor for all those who had made this project the goal of their life. Certainly, it is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the university exists "in exile" and that it turned to be not needed in its own country. But time will pass, everything will fall into place and things will be called by their proper names. The EHU project is acquiring new dimensions; it is recognized by the international community as strategically important for our country's present and future. An international administrative board and the Trust Fund have been created to support the university.

Yes, there will be new difficulties and new tests ahead. But, perhaps, we should not overdramatize this. Is life itself not an inevitable test for each one of us? It depends only on each one of us and how capable we will be of going through these tests.



EHU building (24, Skoriny Avenue – at present Independence Avenue)

INTRODUCTION



*V. Dunaev, A. Sokolova, S. Pankovsky and A. Mikhailov
(Madrid, University of Alcala de Enares)*

The history of European Humanities University is a story of living through the experience of the Western European academic tradition intensively in rather peculiar conditions.

In conditions when on the post-Soviet territory this tradition only started to be generally reconstructed, while in the globalized postindustrial world it was already undergoing through considerable transformations. In conditions when, as historical fate willed, Belarus had a chance to become a place of active exchanges between two cultural “continents” and to serve as a field of mutual rendition of different cultures (in this respect we mean not so much traditional dichotomies of “West” and “East” or “Europe” and “Asia” but many different variants of the same Christian civilization, different historical phases of the same process of society modernization).

It is possible to say that during its 15 years European Humanities University has basically repeated the main stages of the grand History of the European university: from “an esoteric community” as an early medieval form of university corporation through a classical university to the postclassical model of a network university. Such a possibility itself – unfortunately, we walked along this road mainly under very unfavorable external circumstances – forms the basis for reserved optimism concerning the synchronization of the big History of Western European civilization and its peculiar manifestations, no matter how freakish these deviations from the latter might seem to be.

Unfortunately, these “unfavorable circumstances” occupy a disproportionately big place in the history of EHU, which is the history of a respectable higher educational institution that seemed to be destined for a measured academic life. In no way could we expect such political pressure, the closing of the university, “revolutionization” of professorate and students, exile and the fact that all of us would be illuminated with a disturbing aura of being “clandestine” and “alien”. On the other hand, we can say that the identity of “EHU-vites” was formed around this traumatic experience, the distinctness and firmness of which is proportional to the trauma we had lived through.

It is possible to say that the history in which there was both death and revival is already more than history. It is a myth. The myth that should be told. If only for us to acquire a new history.

Below we will try to reconstruct the conceptual and simply human history of EHU. We would like to apologize beforehand for emotionality and possible inaccuracies in narrative details as the book has arisen as the sum of live impressions of many direct participants of the events described. For factographic details (university structure, curricula, instructors, students, the chronicle of events including the twists and turns of the closing of the university) we shall refer the readers to the university site: www.EHU.lt

ЗЕРНО, ИЛИ ПОПЫТКА ВОЗРОЖДЕНИЯ

В МИНСКЕ ОТКРЫВАЕТСЯ ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

реки, то и дело подвергаясь гонению стихий, прожорливости насекомых, напастям произвола природы. Кажется, все кругом противостоит созреванию новой ткани, которая покушается на постоянство мира. Причем натиск усиливается по мере созревания ростка, между противостоянием и гармонией всегда есть

— Откуда же тогда, — спрашиваю я его, — почти сказочная идея возвращения к вечным ценностям в среде хаоса и разрухи? Быть может, это попытка создания нового генофонда? Ведь не секрет, что учебные заведения такого рода элитарны, предназначены для «вы-



Law department students and Professor M. Staak in the classroom

CHAPTER 1.

EHU IS AN "ESOTERIC COMMUNITY"

Европейский гуманитарный университет

объявляет прием студентов на специальности

экономика, философия, богословие, искусство, право, социальные науки

ПРИНИМАЮТСЯ лица, имеющие среднее образование.

Окончание образования удостоверяется дипломами государственного образца с присвоением квалификационных степеней бакалавра и магистра. Продолжительность обучения определяется индивидуальными планами студентов в соответствии с предметной системой обучения, принятой в западных университетах.

Языки преподавания: английский, немецкий, русский и белорусский. Университет обеспечивает интенсивное обу-

чение двум иностранным языкам. Лекции читают преподаватели из Западной Европы, США, крупнейших университетских центров Восточной Европы. Завершение профессионального обучения — в университетах ФРГ. Обучение платное.

Начало занятий с 1 октября 1992 г. Прием документов проводится с 1 сентября по адресу: 220072, г. Минск, проспект Ф. Скорины, 66, Президиум Академии наук Беларуси, тел. 39-58-35, 39-41-63.



Students of law and French-Belarusian faculties

In 1992, EHU was started as a desperate and risky attempt of a small circle of teachers with academician Anatoly Arsenievich Mikhailov at the head to rethink their place in the cultural tradition, to perceive their profession as a calling and their collective work as a vital project, putting their professionalism and well-being at stake. EHU was started as a means of upholding the professional credo by the "caste" which at that moment possessed certain "elitist" or "esoteric" knowledge. The early 1990s witnessed the crash of ideological orthodoxy in humanities and social sciences. In those conditions the knowledge that possessed elementary signs of quality, namely, the knowledge of the European tradition of thought, modern world humanitaristics, the knowledge of original sources and familiarization with the topical research of foreign experts was considered to be "elitist" and "esoteric". However, even such basic professional qualities singled out people who were rejected by the Soviet university environment as an incomprehensible and dangerous "sect". This environment was used to the uniformity of thought and to the one-man command. It found it as something extravagantly strange to deal with subjects remote from the general line (be it Marxism-Leninism or another "state ideology"); while the knowledge of foreign languages and contacts with foreign colleagues were found to be irritatingly suspicious. In this sense, EHU in its early years was really something like a "caste" or a group of people united by their train of thought and way of life; to a certain extent, this group opposed the "mundane" majority and domination of commonplace opinions. If one is to understand the origin and specificity of EHU one should keep in mind that it was initially formed at the department of the history of philosophy at Belarusian State University. From its very beginning BSU as the first university of the republic was called upon to be not simply a place to train professionals of the highest qualification but rather a place for the production of intellectual elite.

The story told by **EHU professor Almira Ousmanova** sounds like a joke: "When I was working in the BSU, a teacher, whose dissertation thesis was connected with Diderot's name, had to go through a competition procedure. During the discussion of his professional achievements a colleague of his emphasized that the teacher "had read Diderot in the original". One of those present asked whether the book had been read in French. "Well, no," followed the answer, "in translation into Russian." What was meant was that in order to write a dissertation about Diderot he had read not only secondary sources, but also Diderot's works..."



However, though the task remained generally declarative. The key positions in the area of politics and culture were occupied by "provincial" people of a reliable class origin and not those with an appropriate quality education (who due to the system that existed then and is still alive today were doomed to play at best the role of second party, such as all kinds of vice heads, advisers, reviewers, speech writers, etc. working side by side with at times tongue-tied and sometimes simply ignorant bureaucrats). All the same, the words "BSU" and "elite" were in many respects synonymous in the consciousness of Belarus citizens. In this context, the BSU philosophy department acted as the higher educational establishment training not simply abstract humanists, but an ideological stronghold for the whole society. It was there, in that grandiloquent epicenter of state ideology, that the zone of reflective calmness and silence of thought called "history of philosophy" was formed. In the late 1980s, the most significant scientific and research potential of the republic in the field of humanitaristics may have concentrated there in the specialization in the history of philosophy.

At that time the employees of the department included A. Mikhailov, V. Dunaev, N. Semenov, E. Gurko, A. Ivanov, S. Pankovsky, N. Bodrov, and others, the majority of whom were eventually directly involved in the formation of European Humanities University, became professors in Western universities and founders of the largest intellectual publishing houses of Russia. They developed author's special courses, opened great areas of "non-Soviet" humanitarian knowledge for students, organized seminars and encouraged others to follow them to scientific conferences. They invited well-known Russian and European experts in the field of philosophy, simply drank tea and had conversations at the department with post-graduate and undergraduate department students. This environment allowed to bring up the teachers of "the EHU second generation", such as V. Furs, D. Korol, A. Melikjan, A. Ousmanova, T. Shchittsova, A. Gomykh, A. Lavrukhin and others. But, first of all, the department teachers provided a new plastic language to understand reality and taught skills of practical thinking in university classrooms. Actually, that was the subversive impulse of the harmless history of philosophy for the authoritarian society: within the limits of this direction one studied and compared various systems of thought and various languages of describing the world without believing that there exists a certain or the only true and adequate philosophy.

Sergey Pankovsky, dean of EHU French-Belarusian faculty: "I was Mikhailov's post-graduate student, but we had known each other even before I began my postgraduate study: from the mid-1980s we frequently ran into each other in bookshops. Then there was a group of people in the city which was always interested in new books, searched for and bought rare books; sellers knew them as their loyal customers. I was one of those people, so was Mikhailov. That is how we got acquainted. When in 1987 Anatoly Arsenievich became head of the department of the history of philosophy he immediately started acting as a reformer, an organizer of various clubs and interesting seminars, including those with student participations. There you could hear presentations of Russian and foreign scientists who were well-known in the world of philosophy. When it became clear that the ideas about philosophy and humanitarian knowledge expressed by Professor Mikhailov and a small group of young teachers and department post-graduate students were not welcomed by the academic environment, it became necessary to search for other possibilities to realize those ideas: Mikhailov left for the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences where a department of foreign philosophy had been created.

However, even at the Institute of Philosophy the atmosphere was quite conservative, and then the idea emerged to create a new independent humanitarian university (actually, it had already arisen at the department but was further developed at the Institute). Its realization became possible after the meeting and an agreement between Mikhailov (by then already an academician) and Metropolitan Philaret. Anatoly Arsenievich's colleague and adherent Vladimir Dunaev became the engine for the practical embodiment of this idea.

At the beginning the University was located in the building of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences and later on in several premises of the building of the Academic Institute of History. During that period there were only a few active people working there who took the risk to implement such a grandiose idea. They had to perform all the necessary duties in that undeveloped academic structure. While experiencing great difficulties they managed to enroll the first bunch of students...

However, the idea unexpectedly received substantial support: it was approved by the then chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic S. Shushkevich. Interest was also expressed by foreign diplomats who started to come to Minsk already in the second half of 1992. The idea of a new humanities university also met the approval of the Ministry of Education, the Executive Committee of the City Soviet of People's Deputies, and the Ministry of Culture that promised not only moral, but also organizational and even material support (which, however, the university never received). But at least moral encouragement was all-round. After all, it was 1992, the time of changes and hopes...

In due course EHU started to turn (not formally, but actually) into an original experimental ground of the Ministry of Education. It was the period when there already (and still!) were no rigid regulating frameworks, when it was still possible to dream and search. And, consequently, the first years of EHU existence were unusually interesting, creative; it took one's breath away! The EHU project became the phenomenon which had been caused by this creative impulse!

However, it was all not very easy and much more difficult than it seemed at first; we were constantly on the verge of failure: no sufficient experience, no money which could guarantee long-term prospects; no dream students; lack of teachers who shared our ideas... But there was a belief and surprising confidence based on some unknown reason that everything would turn out well."

АВТОГРАФ

"Культура — это эблочная кожа над бушующим морем хаоса", — написала Фредрика Ницше, один из самых одиноких и академических немецких мыслителей, не страдавший иллюзиями относительно достижения уровня человеческого на земле. С тех пор прошло 100 лет, и, в суждении, наша история этого пессимистического вывода не опровергла. Треск тонкой лопаточки "кожицы" был порой нами не то что не слышим из-за рокота гигантской неурядливой лавы социальных конфликтов и катаклизмов, он был вопреку пренебрежен. Но вот парадокс: история если не опровергла, то и не смогла убедить в бесповоротности тщетности создания этой нежной, хрупкой поверхности вновь и вновь. При каждом новом удобном случае слои повисающего над человеческим существованием муравья

св кадуцу свои силы на укрепление купола культуры. В одну из таких призрачных передышек между непродолжительными провалами и бесперспективным будущим академик Михаил Анатольевич Арсениевич создал в Минске Европейский гуманитарный университет. Было это в 1992 году. Тогда казалось: еще чуть-чуть — и сундук и ящик в умах и душах возможно преодолеть простым усилием воли. Вернее, это казалось нам, относительно молодым и жаждущим во что бы то ни стало "пронзить помехами". Анатолий Михайлов никогда оптимизмом не страдал, уважал. Как и подобает талантливому ученому, который занимался философией, а не пропагандой, который искал труд, имел его значение не только на территории от Бреста до Владивостока, но и в Европе, который в оригинале читал Канта, Гегеля, Каркерегора, Сартра, Хайдеггера и много кого еще, Анатолий Михайлов принадлежал и принадлежал к пессимистам-прагматикам.

Европейский гуманитарный университет создавался, признаем честно, на пустом месте в прямом и переносном смысле: ни здания, ни преподавательского контингента, ни, соответственно, студенческого. Занятissimi абитуриентов, подававших заявление, всех поряд. Потом, правда, до 60% приходилось отсечь — учиться в этом неподходящем вузе оказалось архаично. Но прошло 7 лет и что же? "Кожка" ЕГУ над "бушующим морем хаоса" стано-

вилась все плотнее: 7 факультетов, блестящие лекторы со всего мира (германист Александр Михайлов, историк античной культуры академик Михаил Гаспаров, культуролог американской литературы Норман Филлипс, философ Дэвид Армстронг). ЕГУ стал университетом по сути, куда стремятся поступить лучшие выпускники, куда считают за честь быть приглашенными на работу лучшие преподаватели. Через какие огненные трудности пришлось пройти академик Михайлову и его сподвижникам, чтобы добиться осуществления этой неподъемной идеи, рассказывать думаю, нет смысла. Но есть смысл в другом: спросить у талантливого философа, человека с нестандартным деидеологизированным мышлением, что есть сегодня, на исходе века, человек и что должно предельно ему в себе самом, чтобы обеспечить будущее своего существования?

Елена МОЛОЧКО, ведущая рубрики "Автограф", "СВ".

— Анатолий Арсениевич, почему Вам так трудно? Почему мы так жестоко обманулись в самих себе, в своих ожиданиях?

— Да, мир становится все более усложняющимся по отношению к нашим попыткам на него воздействовать. Я достаточно pessimistично смотрю на повую будущего нашего региона и будущего всего мира. Идеализмности, которые прописаны на ритуальной интерпретации в европеизированной реальности, не соответствуют действительности, поскольку мы перебрались во власти неправдоподобных иллюзий и ожиданий. Мы предсказали некоторую "нормальность" этого процесса. Но эта "нормальность" развития событий в свою очередь предполагает совсем иной уровень сознания. Помните пропавшую коммунистического общества? Она тоже индустрировала к высоким индексам, к некоему идеализированному сознанию, якобы существовавшему, но фактически отсутствовавшему, что привело к краху системы. Сейчас у нас похожая ситуация... Мы слышим долгое время жизни отгорожен-

Активный пессимист



Jena University, Germany, 1996; A. Mikhailov became Doctor of Philosophy



Professor D. Delapenna and students of law faculty

The emergence of EHU was a symptom showing that within the official Soviet elite whose knowledge and art of existence were finally reduced to catching and to reproducing effectively the discourse of the existing power the new elite was being formed (we resort to this generally quite a pretentious word "elite", meaning the further destiny of EHU in Belarus in which context it will become one of the keywords in the polemics about the closing of the university). This new humanitarian elite did not lay claim to monopoly, to some new ideology and a new, "more correct" system of thought, the cleanliness of which it could jealously protect and spread among people. The fundamental training in the humanities that EHU started to cultivate, consisted, first of all, of the ability to see the world in gleams of various systems of vision, to understand it through "the conflict of interpretations" (P. Ricoeur), to learn the process of thinking itself, to understand the relativity and even danger of any system of thought that aspires to have a completed character and undivided domination in society. These were the sources of the initially conflict situation around EHU in post-Soviet Belarus which entered into its hot phase in 2004. Quazi-Soviet official ideology struggled with nationalist ideology. EHU with its adherence to the European values of critical thinking and professionalism dropped out of the logic of that political struggle. Eventually this critical distancing of EHU away from any system of thought reaching for domination was identified by the authorities as a position that concealed an essential threat to official ideology and this position was believed to be as dangerous as the contradirectional ideology. The highest state bodies found EHU to be an organization that was training the "wrong" elite and, thus, through the use of administrative measures it was closed.

But in the early 1990s in the post-Soviet university environment of Belarus people who stood out from the traditional teaching experience (did not read the same standard courses for years, did not simulate scientific activity as a means to climb the administrative ladder or simply to keep for themselves "teaching positions" and "credit hours"), seemed to be like snobs or sectarians. The strange abstractedness from life of the scientific interests of those people – existentialism, phenomenology, dialogism, poststructuralism, etc. (in the understanding of "civil servants" in the Humanities area) – seemed to be a latent challenge to "the very foundations". At work and out of work they talked about the same things, got and exchanged the latest publications; they professed certain aesthetic views, spoke in a "non-understandable" language, were too ironic, exchanged glances knowingly, etc. Where for others it was sufficient to reproduce another person's wisdom or a cliché, they searched for new words, cultivated the ability to make an argument, the form of thought and style of speech (just like for the Roman public figure at the times of Plinius Jr. perfection of formulations and original figurativeness of statements, i.e. promotion of the general degree of civilizedness of fellow citizens, were not less if not even more important than the direct result of his judicial or political speech).

This produced the spirit of EHU, which is difficult to formulate (something like "the style does not lie") but which is perceptible by everyone who is in this or that way involved in it. The spirit of opposition to militant platitude, ignorant self-confidence and cliché thinking, which, to a great regret, in our country ceases to be the natural characteristic of intelligentsia, turning into the heroics of daily routine of separate professional circles.

During the first years of its existence EHU does not have its own building, classrooms, well-organized methodological support. The library only starts to be formed, the staff is rather small, and the future is vague. However, the team that sailed on "a small raft" away from the stable, but dull coasts of civil service, establishes the new corporate culture of mutual understanding and assistance and creates the feeling of personal responsibility for the process of swimming in the sea of open possibilities.



EHU Vice-Rector Tatyana Galko: *“For me in many respects EHU is a Japanese phenomenon. On the one hand, there is novelty, leadership, grand scale, and on the other hand, there is the spirit which is not characteristic in such a degree either for Europe or for America. It is the attitude towards the organization as if it were “their own project”, and it is the attitude one has towards one’s family, towards one’s own home, towards the tradition you are joining. Everyone, from a coordinator to the rector, could say, “EHU is my project.” It cannot be found in any large university. Nothing similar can be found unless there is informal authority of leaders which from the very beginning created the phenomenon of EHU. Besides his highest professionalism and irreproachable reputation, Anatoly Arsenievich Mikhailov, the founding father of EHU, possesses something absolutely indescribable; call it charisma or the person’s intellectual and moral charm. Vladimir Aleksandrovich Dunaev formed with Mikhailov that very pair that actually defined the cultural identity of EHU. Vladimir Aleksandrovich is a strategist, theoretician and practitioner of management of higher educational establishments, a man of iron, an “X-ray man” who sees through all and everything. People trust them and consciously participate in their project as in their own one.”*



Members of the Tempus-Tacis project and K. Grelouis

New relations between bosses and their subordinates based on the merging of formal and informal leadership and on collegiate professional principles were established. Actually, from the very beginning, there were no bosses in EHU in the sense of the word typical for Belarusian red tape. There were no external, appointed people who could occupy other supervising positions thanks to the game of personnel chances leaving “the ship” under certain circumstances. All sat in the same “boat”, and it spontaneously generated informal democracy of more confidential and equal relations.

The EHU management, first of all, rector Anatoly Mikhailov, first vice-rector Vladimir Dunaev, deans and department heads were at first directly, and then figuratively tutors for their younger colleagues, not just human resource managers. Distances between them were established not from above, on the basis of formal instructions, but rather from below because of the many-year knowledge of the people, understanding of their role in their own professional and personal formation, and respect for their personal qualities and academic merits. The EHU top administrators even today find displays of administrative hierarchies to be a burden, treating their own “ranks” and “positions” ironically.



The Tempus-Taxis conference

The same format was extended to the relations between students and teachers. If the teacher does not simply act as a disseminator of other people's truths but rather has an engaging conversation with the audience about his own understanding of topical social problems, he does not have to support his course with any special tactics of intimidation and punishment; there is no need to adhere to bureaucratic conservatism and stiffness in clothes and behavior; he does not require special rituals of veneration of his personality (which is, in reality, the back side of non-professionalism). From the very beginning, EHU students were saved from university drilling, namely, sitting in the ordered poses "from beginning to end" of classes, as in a controlled-access enterprise; an obligatory rising like in the army upon the coming of the teacher into the classroom; rigid control over leaving and coming into the classroom; use of shorthand to record lectures when the teacher dictates; compulsory forms of participation in «public life» (from ideological events to work on the farms), etc. Among the people in the classroom there were independent, interested people who had consciously chosen what and how to study. Joint discussions, a constant live exchange of opinions, a system of research seminars and gatherings of creative people and informal communication all helped to democratize relations between students and teachers. From the very beginning, students learnt how to use their freedom responsibly understanding that they themselves should be interesting to the teacher by their diligence and originality and that the absence of petty tutelage and the right to dispose of one's life is given at the price of giving up infantile hopes that someone else might arrange their life in the best way possible.

«When academician Mikhailov was being congratulated on one of his jubilees and the person making a solemn speech got off key because of all the excitement and began the official part: "Dear Anatoly Arsenievich, I have not prepared my speech in advance, but I would like to say . . .," Mikhailov, laughing, interrupted him with the phrase, "Why did you treat such an important event so nonchalantly?" immediately downsizing the CPSU-Soviet pathos of the event" (Andrey Gornykh).

"I cannot imagine that a state university could have such a scenario when a student going through a vital crisis addresses the dean for a heart-to-heart conversation. At EHU such things happened constantly. Students came to Grigory Yakovlevich Minenkov who was like a father, or to Alla Anatolievna Sokolova, who was a "department mom" (Almira Ousmanova).



Students near the classroom building (Brovki St., 3a)

Active and dialogical teaching process became the major sign of the general democratic character of university, or, in other words, its "logo". After all, if a student of natural sciences can learn a number of proved formulas and then technically put them into practice, then for a student of humanities certain ready "recorded" knowledge runs counter to the essence of arts education. "Huge bulk of knowledge does not teach," (Geraklit). It is not the amount of knowledge that teaches but its understanding. Otherwise, we only simulate higher education in humanities reducing it to exercises in passive mnemonics when a student is dictated a certain quantity of data, and during the examination the student tries "to recollect everything" operating in the regime of a "deaf phone" returning to the teacher scraps of his lectures.

In EHU the emphasis was on interactivity, and the goal was to make sure that classes proceeded in the mode of teamwork, joint discussion and talking the text over. The idea was to distance oneself from the position according to which in humanities there can be truth to be imposed. Humanities are a field of human problems, and they have to be discussed. That was the main methodological “trump card” of EHU. In humanities it is necessary to provoke and motivate students so that they start analyzing what they have read.

It was important to make yesterday’s Soviet school graduates to drop the habit of believing that a learner’s basic skill is the demonstration of true knowledge. The ethics of humanitarian search is that when dealing with special objects of knowledge – texts in the broad sense of the word (literary, political, cinematographic, etc.), nothing can be known for certain and there are no “correct answers” in this area. Text interpretation presupposes productive interaction of understanding and misunderstanding (after all, the measure of another’s misunderstanding that I allow is the condition of his freedom) and the ability to listen and hear another. This “ability for a conversation” (H.-G.Gadamer) was used as the basis of understanding the quality of training in humanities in EHU.

Therefore, the “professional duty” of an EHU student is not so much to demonstrate how eternal truths have been learnt but rather to work daily to detect one’s own ignorance or misunderstanding. A young person going to university already guesses that he knows infinitesimally little (unlike the average person who knows “everything or nearly everything”). Education in humanities starts with “I know that I know nothing.” Then there should be a transition from ignorance in general to specific ignorance, to finding out what it is that I do not know. And until the student himself formulates his ignorance and learns to ask questions and until he defines the borders of his individual misunderstanding, the teacher cannot help him to fill in these “white spots”.

Only what is retold by a person who has found his own words to do so can be considered humanitarian knowledge. Hence, humanitarian knowledge is not an ability to repeat “something close to the original text” told by a certain authority; rather, it is an ability to continue the speech of the teacher or the author, an ability to pick up where it was interrupted and an ability to return the gift of the word.

Transition from monologic forms of education to a conversation with students in the classroom was also promoted by work in small student groups. A great number of freshmen and sophomore students gathered in EHU for lectures in general disciplines. Students had their specialty subjects already in their second year at the university, and the teacher worked with 10-20 students in the classroom while with senior students the number was frequently about 5-10 students in the classroom. It gave a chance to talk with and hear everyone and to generate a peculiar “esoteric” community of individualities in each academic year. During numerous state inspections of the university, members of the inspection teams commented on the fact that EHU really conducts a “piece” preparation of specialists.

Fitting all these numerous minigroups and small groups for seminars, practical classes of professional skill, tutorships, business games, etc. into an extremely intense university schedule can only be done by a virtuoso. At EHU such a virtuoso was the methodological department and all its services. At various times the methodological personnel was inspired to perform this difficult activity that frequently demanded filigree skills by its heads – Larissa Semenova, Galiya Malikova, Natalia Alshevskaya, Galina Gavrilyuk. One of the professors who often worked in foreign universities called their work “the most European-like at the European Humanities University”. Together with their assistants they helped faculties and departments to harmonize a variety of sophisticated curricula and programs into a balanced concept of training in humanities at EHU, to implant forms and methods of organizing the educational process that were so untraditional for our system. So it is no surprise that the selection for the positions of methodologists was not less careful than that for the selection of teaching or administrative staff. I remember that we had to interview 14 people for the position of the methodologist at the new department of information technologies! (Tatyana Galko).



O. Kovaleva with students in the student's club

The philosophy of humanitarian education that so organically comes out of the specialized philosophical studies of the founding fathers became the base upon which the teaching process at EHU was organized. It was used to build upon it various special disciplines which, on the one hand, were focused on providing students with advanced knowledge in their chosen areas while, on the other hand, they were called upon to restore links with the European cultural tradition. Everyone, from a theologian to an economist, studied classic languages and new European culture, took courses in literary and art criticism, philosophy, religion and special courses.



First graduates of the French-Belarusian faculty

For instance, at the philosophy department they meticulously studied Western European metaphysics, in particular, the tradition of German philosophy from Kant and Hegel to Heidegger and Gadamer. Among the most important ones were the courses on the nature of philosophical knowledge, philosophy of dialogue, phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics. It was a real school of "pure thinking" and simultaneously a workshop to immerse in the two-thousand-year-old tradition of Western European civilization. A. Mikhailov's personal, existential experience and classical academism, his international contacts set the highest standards of philosophical life at the department and in EHU on the whole. The faculty of law headed by Alla Sokolova actively joined the traditions of European universities and collected the most interesting world experience of legal education. The concept of the department focusing on international private law was developed. Time has shown the correctness of this choice as the market of educational services had a great demand for this particular area. If the department had chosen public law as its major then EHU graduates would have experienced considerable difficulties finding employment because of the specificity of the Belarusian legal field. General accent was made on teaching subjects of European law as at that time nobody taught it in Belarus on a systematic basis, and it was not expected to happen. It was the choice of the future. The law faculty opened the first "legal clinic" which served as an advisory laboratory of law where citizens received legal consultations of students under the supervision of a practicing lawyer free of charge. Subsequently, this experience began to be used in other universities throughout the country.

The French-Belarusian faculty was a unique project of EHU. It was set up in 1993 and was initiated by the French embassy. At the beginning of 1992, Alexander Tolstoy as an adviser of the French Embassy arrived in Belarus, and EHU was one of the first structures that he addressed on behalf of the embassy. The necessity to open up such a department was determined by the desire to reform education in the field of political sciences, training professionals for state administration in the area of international relations as their lack was sharply felt by the young independent state. Those who trained such experts in state universities at that time used scientific communism as the basis. Reorganization in this area was carried out with enormous difficulties. Then it was common not to know foreign languages, not to be able and at times not to be willing to address the experience of foreign colleagues and researchers. However, the department headed by co-deans Aleksey Tolstoy and Sergey Pankovsky got down to business with great enthusiasm. According to the evaluation given by the French, the French-Belarusian faculty soon became one of the most successful projects created in Europe with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.

So the breakthrough made in many other directions towards a new quality of education was provided through joint international projects becoming a basis for the creation of new special or interdisciplinary structures such as institutes, centers, and laboratories. A "chamber" university kept acquiring "affiliated structures", which were sometimes better known abroad than in Belarus through no fault of the university.



EHU personnel

The initial stage of EHU history is the time of formation of the Team (which will then stand all the tests of time). University management had personal extensive talks with each candidate to find out not only about the candidate's scientific or pedagogical interests, but also their qualification level, motivation to work at EHU and, on the whole, the style of thinking of the person and his/her ability to adapt to the curricula and scientific projects of the university. For this reason EHU left in the cold a few quite professional and worthy people who, as we may hope, do not bear a grudge against us. EHU staff was formed gradually and very carefully (it is impossible to overestimate the merits of the first vice-rector Vladimir Dunaev); therefore, there was a surprising human compatibility and professional mutual understanding of all staff members. EHU corporate culture is businesslike, civilized and benevolent starting with an affable smile of the janitor at the entrance and impeccably polite and professional methodologists of faculties and departments and continued with unobtrusive care about visitors in the administration, readiness to render all possible assistance, and offers of coffee and fresh newspapers, etc. It so strongly affected the mentality of yesterday's instructors of state universities that at first some of them were inclined to see a certain dirty trick in all of this while others were about to drop an unintentional tear. Thanks to the level of everyday comfort and psychological ease EHU was a university of a new generation, and it was certainly perceived by colleagues as such.

Here are some of the fragments of private stories about people's transfer to EHU which appeared to be something like Transition from one world into another. However, we would not like to classify everything connected with the state system of higher education, especially with the BSU, indiscriminately as unequivocally grey, retrograde, and servile. There are good and talented people always and everywhere, and their percentage does not fall below a certain level in any organization. In this case it is more about the management system which prevailed and pushed them aside to the periphery of academic communities or ousted them altogether.

EHU Professor Vladimir Furs: *"I had been working in the BSU since 1989. Right after finishing my post-graduate course I started working at the department of philosophy and during the first period in BSU I was quite enthusiastic; together with other young teachers we tried to begin teaching some new courses and had optional classes with students. It seemed to us that a new generation was coming, with which could be connected hope for a new life of Belarusian philosophy and its approaching some decent standards. This period of enthusiastic young teaching in BSU continued for a few years, and then I began to notice that somehow our enthusiasm was fading and our undertakings had no continuation or were not really encouraged.*

Over the last few years of my work at the BSU (the second half of the 1990s) I had a constant feeling that time was going as though in a circle, one year similar to another, you carry out some routine duties, but, in general, nothing happens, and there is a feeling that nothing will ever happen. I thought that I should improve my scientific status and decided to write and defend a doctoral dissertation. Unfortunately, the administration did not quite like my quickness. Thus, in 2000 I ran away to St Petersburg, to St Petersburg University, to its philosophy department. To the doctoral school. I finished it in 2002, and then I no longer hesitated about the place of my future employment. I was not going back to the BSU. For me there was only one natural choice, and it was EHU as I, already in the doctoral school, held there one scientific research seminar with young scholars and could see the university from within quite well.

I left the BSU. I left just because I could not accept the state of the philosophical professional environment, and, first of all, the decline of professional motivation of teachers as this was at the root of everything else. If there were motivation for professional work, then it would be possible to reconstruct and reorganize the educational process; then it would be possible to work with students on a more interested basis, to study languages, etc. In my opinion, the crisis of humanities education became part of the macrosocial context when the impulse of changes connected with reorganization and hopes for something new ran low and got exhausted; thus, there started a reverse movement that affected universities.

Then why specifically EHU? To me it seemed to be the platform where employees and instructors are not simply given a chance for professional growth, but where this growth is very much expected and where initiatives and projects are encouraged. Firstly, there is an absolutely different rhythm of a professional life there. Secondly, EHU was a small-scale university and I was attracted by the possibility of extremely individualized work with students and post-graduate students, as there were no groups of several dozens of persons. Here the groups were ridiculously small. It, probably, was not so good for economic reasons, but from the point of view of work with students it was splendid! I joined EHU in 2002 and have never regretted it since. There was something for me to do there; there I felt myself grow. The department of philosophy and cultural studies provided a very fruitful competitive environment; it was a meeting place for teachers and researchers who were absolutely different in their theoretical beliefs and in their theoretical preferences. But all of them were people involved in various international projects who had gone through training in European and American universities. They were the people who were ambitious enough, and it was interesting with them; they did not allow one to relax, and their presence demanded intellectual efforts. Constant efforts! Nobody discussed any household and dacha problems in the lobby or during departmental meetings. This was the place for professional discussions and professional questions. It was an absolutely different experiencing of time, and finally it broke the circle..."



Philosopher V. Podoroga (Moscow, Institute of Philosophy)
and participants of the the research seminar on visual culture (2002)

EHU professor Andrey Gornyykh: *"Yes, it was the time of such idealism when the idea turned out to be primary, and "the matter" flexible. There was anarchy, that's true. Anarchy in the positive, theoretical sense of the word. After all, anarchy is actually not unbridled hooliganism or absence of laws; rather it is the absence of an absolute, centralized management, authority, the centre of the supreme power. Anarchy existed not in the relations between EHU and the state – there was no anarchy there, instead there was a peaceful and, at the beginning, mutually advantageous coexistence. But EHU itself was a creative commonwealth of "anarchies" of a different level. If we follow the theoretical definition, anarchy is organization from below upwards instead of sending some rigid models and schemes from top to bottom. In EHU initiative rose from below. In this situation, it was not required to have that imperious eye which would supervise all and everything, not even trying to understand the essence of the matter. After all, a professional person in his rightful place understands and sees more than any boss. Any expert moving "upward" gets de-professionalized, and anarchy is a healthy suspicion regarding this issue. Replace the word "anarchy" with the expression "academic autonomy", and things will definitely take a serious turn.*

EHU professor Almira Ousmanova: *"Before starting to work for EHU I had been an associate professor at the BSU department of ethics, aesthetics and history of philosophy, and everything was O.K. for me there. It was a normal, typical career of an associate professor, Ph. D. in the main university of the country. And I remember that the invitation to come to EHU and to lecture at the department of arts was unexpected for me . . . The art department like the whole of EHU was going through the painful period of growth. On the one hand, it was desirable to preserve academic freedom and the whole non-standard character of what the university was, while, on the other hand, it was absolutely necessary to adapt somehow to the local educational environment and to those rules which were imposed on the university by the Ministry of Education and all other bodies. Thus, it was necessary to become a university in a sense more traditional for society. By and large all other original post-Soviet universities, such as European University in Petersburg or Central European University in Budapest had to go through this. They passed such a period when it was necessary for them to be formed and kind of integrate into the educational context of society. I joined EHU at exactly such a moment. I remember how we discussed the problems of forming curricula and programs together with the deans – Grigory Yakovlevich Minenkov and Larissa Anatolievna Gusakovskaya. But on the whole it was absolute freedom if not to say anarchy. The anarchist, from the point of view of one French theorist (Guy Debord), is freedom professional. And in this sense all "EHU people" are such professionals of freedom. For us it is in general very difficult to think about how to return to the state system when, really, someone has total control over you, when your each step is regulated, when you are watched by all: from the janitor to the dean. The limits of your initiative are very rigidly set.*

From the very beginning, EHU amazed us with its cardinal rupture with this Soviet tradition. With it EHU conquered my soul and, fortunately, still holds it. There is such a unique situation at EHU when each person can find her- or himself a place not because someone has released this place or because he has been employed, has been offered to do this and that. It is possible to say that in EHU people "think out" work by themselves and for themselves. It can be something small, for example, an original author's course, and it can also be the whole scientific direction or an educational program."

Each EHU unit, be it a department, research centre or faculty, used the widest academic autonomy in their choice of conceptual strategy of development and means of its realization, in forming the curriculum and staff. Moreover, inside the communities of like-minded people, even "esoteric" ones, each teacher himself defined his teaching format (course name, topics, teaching structure, etc.). The results of individual efforts transformed into the mosaic of the common cause, which perfectly fitted one another.

By the way, the system when a lower-level employee or a worker incurs many functions of the manager, turns into a self-manager, today becomes a powerful factor for breakthroughs and, actually, economic efficiency. I mean, in particular, the so-called phenomenon of "toyotaim" that is coming as a successful economic model of the 21st century instead of "fordism". It is possible to say that BSU where the process of my formation took place and to which I am grateful for everything I received there, got stuck at the stage of the "conveyor"-like humanitarian production: it is a kind of "fordism" where everyone mechanically executes his or her operation perfected to automatism by infinite repetitions under the vigilant surveillance of technologists-ideologists.

EHU created no problems for people going to an international conference or training. Nobody had to knock at bureaucratic doorways like a beggar, nobody had to abase himself and explain that "it was more necessary for him than for anyone else". Everybody understood perfectly well that it was an obligatory condition for elementary preservation of professionalism, let alone growth. "The spirit feast", according to the well-known expression of the last secretary general, took place in the area of books. Thanks to the active and effective library policy of the university teachers got an opportunity to order the latest foreign literature so necessary for teaching and research on a regular basis. But the most important thing is the people with whom and for whom there was a strong desire to think out something new and to work. People for whom research became a way of life, instead of a means to make money (that, by the way, had been blunted for a very long time). This is how I can describe in brief the reasons which forced me do the "ritual of moving" to EHU."

It is possible to say that right at the beginning there was a different outside world and there was a university which was being built up from within as an alternative project. EHU was treated as an equal among strangers (among new non-state universities on the post-Soviet territory and Western universities) and it was a stranger among the local ones (the majority of Belarusian universities). In this respect EHU really possessed a certain “subversive” potential, not a political but a cultural intellectual potential that was cracking the “bark” of the impenetrable social, scientific and institutional conventions that developed in the already mentioned BSU.

What the BSU department of the history of philosophy valued most was its identity. When the philosophical department was being formed at EHU, the sign of the new was exactly the fact that unlike the situation in the state universities where the Marxism-Leninism monolith was changed into an incomprehensible mix of post-perestroika disciplines, separate individuals and different directions of philosophy, we managed to save our identity, our adherence to fundamental humanitaristics, first of all phenomenological and existential-hermeneutical traditions. We offered a recognizable conceptual direction in place of the newly fabricated mix, and it gave the department its identity. To some extent it was characteristic of other EHU departments. At the departments of law, psychology and other departments the deans formed topical and scientifically integral programs. This not only attracted students, but also made their perspective clear already during their first steps of training – in what context and where they were moving.

From the very beginning, EHU offered elective courses. We wanted to make the educational process as flexible and attractive as possible, to be more individually focused so that students could move within the framework of their integrated plan, i.e., the schedule, and always realize their personal choice, remaining within the framework of any certain direction, be it psychology, philosophy, economy or law. From the very beginning this emphasis on personal choice regarding one's academic life was attractive to students, especially in the general human aspect.

EHU professor Tatyana Shchittsova: *“I started working in EHU as a coordinator of an educational program, receiving, in particular, a wide experience of drawing up schedules. The first years the schedule looked like this: the optional “History of Western civilizations”, or “History of literature”, or “History of modern Western philosophy”, and it was compulsory for all students. But that was only a formal label, and “inside” the designated course there were some more courses (at least two) or as many as it was possible to offer proceeding from the availability of instructors and quantity of students. But there was always a choice, and students could select one of the courses on the basis of their own interests. At first sight it looked like a minor detail but it was vital because it passed through the whole system of forming the curriculum.*

This availability of elective courses as a major element of architectonics of our university educational process constantly generated certain tension in relations with the ministerial bodies that initiated numerous check-ups. It was necessary to bring EHU curricula into accord with the formal requirements of the Ministry of Education. Gradually it was this specific element – flexibility and freedom of choice – that became the most difficult to fulfill because of the external conditions of survival, if one is to call things by their proper name. We tried to offer students some variety of possibilities but already in a disguised way.”

Семеро первых из ЕГУ



Эти двое ребят и пятеро симпатичных девушек – первые выпускники факультета права Европейского гуманитарного университета.

Во вторник, после шуточного судебного заседания, разбиравшего их попытку покушения на получение дипломов, в том числе и с отличием, эти дипломы им все-таки были вручены. Опросив свидетелей-преподавателей, защиту и обвинение, “суд” счел всю семерку достойной первых дипломов ЕГУ.

С трудоустройством, как и полагается при таком прекрасном образовании, у этих ребят проблем нет.

First graduates of the law faculty

The period of EHU formation was a stage of constant search and establishment of international contacts. EHU teachers took keen interest in everything that was happening in the world, organized student group trips to scientific events abroad through self-search of sponsors' aid. EHU professor Alla Sokolova often used the phrase “the thirst for the new” to describe this period, and this expression catches this mood of enthusiastic excitement that the EHU leading specialists experienced while putting together their university bit by bit – new books, new concepts, new techniques, and new people. Civilized small-community atmosphere which favorably distinguished EHU from big educational institutions (and it would be retained later as well), high spirits when people greet everyone they meet, smile at everyone as if the person were their old acquaintance (in the majority of cases, they are). Such was the atmosphere of the early EHU. The bottom of the ship of the university that had just been launched was yet clear of the intestine squabbles and personal antipathies; on board there were no worthless crew members who got to the university through their connections or any untalented people; the ship crew coped with the rigging harmoniously and cheerfully, and the vessel was moving faster and faster.

The first years of the university formation were the times when the community of professionals tried to find adequate forms of scientific and pedagogical activities; it was the time of experiments in the field of higher education. In the second half of the 1990s, EHU starts functioning as a full-fledged classical university, a national phenomenon with general social functions. By definition a university cultivates encyclopedic knowledge and plays a crucial role in the creation of an overall picture of the world for people of the given culture. A classical university, the idea of which was developed by I. Kant and A. Humboldt, was the answer to the challenges of the time, namely the crisis of the traditional picture of the world connected with the modernization of Western society including political centralization, utilitarian turn of science, division of labor, and particularization and specialization of various areas of knowledge. There was a requirement to oppose the tendency to fragmentize knowledge and its division with impenetrable disciplinary partitions with new universalism of knowledge, based on philosophical reflection.



Student's theater

At a classical university knowledge itself and unity of various special areas of knowledge become a special object of reflection (B. Riddings). Philosophy as reflection over the unity of all private knowledge in the given context acts as the gravitation centre around which various private humanitarian disciplines “rotate” on their own orbits. For example, if psychology, anthropology, sociology. etc. study a human being from their own angles, then philosophy tries to raise the question about the cumulative image of a human being which escapes every fixed point of view. At the same time philosophy did not aspire to fulfill the role of the ideological instructor of all other disciplines; rather it was an intermediary between them supporting an interdisciplinary dialogue. It cultivated depth and critical direction of thinking which could unite various departments, and at the highest level the whole society which members would be capable of working out common decisions on the basis of free rational discussions. A classical university the kernel of which is the philosophical department has carried out the role of the major institute of reproducing cultural tradition for more than a century and a half.

Development of cultural identity, and, first of all, of the national idea (connected with political centralization) was the essential social function of classical university. If there is national history, art, politics then what is the essence of the national as such? Philosophy raised such a question and looked for the answer thinking over the system of similarities of the most various displays of the given culture. Thus, the classical university was called upon not only to prepare specialists of the highest category in respective fields of knowledge, but also to cultivate in students the understanding of the unity of national culture, to bring up active members of civil society which, along with state institutions, could act as the second pole of the united nation. As a classical university in Belarus at the end of the 20th century, EHU could not help but experience serious difficulties. Our university community kept speaking about the fact that the forced nationalization of Belarus, the most “Soviet” republic of the USSR (because of its historical destiny), is not simply unrealistic but it is fraught with serious dangers. When in the second half of the 1990s the tendencies of restoration of authoritarianism in the republic became much more evident the EHU community made choice in favor of the all-European values as the idea that could unite Belarusian society on a civilized basis in the foreseeable future.



G. Kuchinsky, dean of the faculty of psychology

In the situation when there was a devaluation of humanitarian knowledge and professional standards were being destroyed and when Belarus was turning off from the European way of development the university mission became even clearer for all of us, namely, to struggle for the preservation of prestige and quality of humanitarian knowledge in Belarus, to promote restoration of Belarus's links with the European cultural tradition and dialogue between Belarusian society and Europe. It was the response to all those who saw the primary goal of the university mainly in accelerated Belarusification. For the majority of EHU teachers this road concealed in itself serious concessions to professionalism, replacement of academic values by new ideological concepts. If the results of pedagogical and scientific activities of EHU are recognized all over the world we, citizens of Belarus, thus make our contribution to the independence and strengthening of the human potential of our republic. The better we carry out our professional duty, the bigger our contribution will be. There is still a trail of gossip and accusations from many representatives of the nationally oriented intelligentsia that EHU is "the hand of Moscow" and almost "a KGB project" to russify Belarus. It is difficult to comment upon these ideas seriously. The fact that EHU is now in Vilnius speaks for itself. Lithuanian and, more widely, European society recognized the university mission in establishing a dialogue of the post-Soviet countries with Europe and world community. European values, adequately and effectively expressed in any European language, including Belarusian, are the things that, in our opinion, can become the area for consolidating Belarusian intelligentsia which is not so numerous to allow itself the luxury of division into "our guys" and "aliens".

Говорим: вуз элитарный, подразумеваем: Европейский Гуманитарный Университет

Без хорошего образования успеха не добьются. Еще недавно над этими словами можно было смеяться, но сегодня их истинность уже мало кто оспаривает. Престиж высшего образования растет, и это подтверждают растущие год от года конкурсы в высших учебных заведениях Беларуси.

Самым трудным оказалось начало. Не хватало специалистов, литературы, опыта. К тому же в Беларуси не было традиции преподавания многих дисциплин, введенных в ЕГУ, — например, истории и теории искусства. А факультет теологии, первый и единственный не только в республике, но и в стране СНГ, пришлось создавать вообще на голый

ЕГУ читали лекции 4 академика, один член-корреспондент, 55 профессоров, 29 докторов, 130 кандидатов наук и 90 доцентов. Едва ли остальные негосударственные вузы (да и государственные тоже) могут похвастать таким научным потенциалом!

Изучение гуманитарных дисциплин в ЕГУ сочетается с лингвистической подготовкой,

Особая гордость ЕГУ — библиотека, равной которой в Беларуси нет. Она содержит одну из лучших коллекций современной иностранной литературы по гуманитарным наукам. Сегодня она насчитывает около 30 тысяч томов. В течение ближайших нескольких лет их количество здесь рассчитывают довести до 200 тысяч.

А недавно в универси-

поддерживаемых Институтом открытого общества.

Особо тесные узы связывает ЕГУ с Францией. При участии МИДа этой страны здесь создан франко-белорусский факультет политических и административных наук. Преподавание большинства дисциплин здесь ведется специалистами из Франции. Факультет является крупнейшей французской образовательной программой в Восточной Европе и странах бывшего СССР.

При содействии французских министерств университет готовят также специалисты в области охраны культурного наследия и международного

гии, правоохранения и т.д. С лекциями перед студентами выступают выдающиеся ученые, политики, деятели культуры и церкви. Среди них — Советский Патриарх Вселенной Алексий II, известный американский писатель Норман Мэйлер, выдающийся режиссер Александр Сокуров, крупный политолог современности и советник премьер-министра Франции Ги Сорбан, академик Л. Гаспаров и другие.

Кого готовят в ЕГУ и как туда поступить
Европейский Гуманитарный Университет проводит обучение на шести факультетах: экономии

After all, Belarus did not turn away from Europe to Russia but moved to some peripheral country road of civilization. Accordingly, it would be no less erroneous to go to another extreme and to treat the mission of EHU as a part of the geopolitical project of Belarus turning away from Russia. We may hope that for all current political confrontations both Russia and Europe are on the same road of civilization. Russia is an original and integral part of European civilization. In this sense the EHU project is a part of the project of self-understanding of Europe, its tense but productive internal dialogue over the barriers of the East and the West, the North and the South. Frankly speaking, the matter is to return Belarus into the channel of this dialogue, to return it to the main road of the civilized world.

These preconditions determined our version of a classical university — with quite an unusual combination of philosophy and theology as its kernel. In other words, during the epoch of the struggle of extremes of Soviet-oriented ideology and nationalism with unpredictable results leading to disintegration of society the university professed as a Belarusian idea a combination of values of European rationalism and Christian civilization, capable of creating the basis for the country's future. EHU as a classical university professed the revival of European values such as public dialogue, civil freedoms, professional elites, university autonomy, critical intellectuals, etc. The university professed not even bilingualism but polylingualism. We encountered no problems with free mutual understanding of the Russian and Belarusian languages. Whoever considered it necessary gave lectures in the Belarusian language. Not a single Belarusian-speaking student was compelled to switch over to Russian even if everyone else around was Russian-speaking. We tried to minimize such problems with understanding our colleagues in European languages. Never had EHU any restrictions or administrative compulsion connected with language; everyone spoke the language which most flexibly expressed his thought.

In the days when the names of Belarusian higher educational establishments were changed from institutes to universities, at times without any considerable content reorganization, EHU adhered to the classical university standards in which fundamental training in humanities, scientific research and education of not just experts in different areas but thinking individuals would define the development strategy. Since the second half of the 1990s EHU has become a full-fledged higher educational institution. During the first years, the atmosphere at the university was very much home-like. When EHU saw in the New Year for the first time, all the participants of the project found enough room around one table in the rector's office. You could follow the growth of the university by watching the size of the halls to celebrate the New Year. In 1996, it became too crowded even in the biggest classroom. At that time we could already call EHU "a vigorously existing university" (S. Pankovsky). The departments were completely formed, students were enrolled in all the courses. The university provided a whole spectrum of basic humanitarian disciplines (philosophy, theology, cultural science, political science, psychology, law, economic theory, art studies). The university has the most advanced specialized library collection on humanities.



Professor O. Chernyshev



Teaching staff extends greatly, the main departments have a wise, cohesive and innovation-oriented team of the deans (Metropolitan Philaret, A. Sokolova, G. Minenkov, L. Gusakovskaya, S. Pankovsky, G. Kuchinsky, A. Bakanov, A. Gorelik, etc.). All this allows to speak not only about quantitative changes but also about the new quality of the university.

The "artistic wave" at EHU is becoming stronger; it came to life when the first head of the art studies program Igor Dukhan began inviting interesting foreign experts and organizing external master classes for students in the largest museums of Russia. In the classical EHU the art faculty was headed by Larissa Anatolievna Gusakovskaya. During the university crisis period, the director of the Zaslavl memorial museum Alexander Nikolaevich Kolbasko became head of the department. For a long time, the whole Academy of Arts has existed in Belarus; however, the EHU arts department did not become its reduced copy. Like the university on the whole, it was primarily an experiment, which (and it was art, too) gathered creative people inclined to non-standard innovations. For example, future designers came to EHU to study the unique phenomenon called "Conceptual design".

This direction did not take root at the academy; so its creators – Igor Gerasimenko and Oleg Tchernyshev – came to EHU with their brainchild and in an orderly and logical way tried to put up together a program for training experts who would be able to solve complex design problems. Those who chose the specialty "Tourism and Cultural Heritage" learnt to be modern professional tourist managers and to interpret heritage not on the basis of pure economy or geography, but on the understanding of the essence of historical and cultural heritage. The model was French, and it got implanted at EHU thanks to the efforts of a very interesting person – Svetlana Viktorovna Artyushevskaya who had been trained in France for two years and managed to develop her authorial program of preparing managers-travel agency operators. In principle, it can be said that in EHU everyone from students to teachers of various departments were partly free artists: this is where "atmosphere of unlikeness was multiplied" (A. Kolbasko).



*Dean of the arts faculty L. Gusakovskaya
and chair of the department of museum research and tourism A. Kolbasko*

Alexander Kolbasko, dean of the EHU arts faculty: *“Specialists from the Academy of Arts joined us and together, not without difficulties, we tried to build up a new system of preparing critics, designers, and tourist managers. To teach students to think and understand art and culture not as a set of facts, names and products, but rather as something unique and original that exists in a specific place, in specific space and in a specific context. For example, there was a very interesting course of Oleg Nikolaevich Kukrak who ideologically affected several of our specialties. It was called “Historical and spatial categories of European culture”. Art historians from Russia, Israel and America came to teach. We had excellent links dealing with tourism with France, special disciplines were taught in French by French teachers. Interesting courses were developed for designers. The teachers working in this specialization might have been unduly jealous in their attitude to external “intrusions” trying to cover up the whole teaching process with their pupils. However, we should give them their due: a whole galaxy of first-class teachers and heads of programs grew up at the department. Today our graduates Irina Poleshchuk and Elena Tolstik are co-coordinators of EHU contemporary art programs in Lithuania. After her postgraduate study of philosophy Alla Mikhailovna Pigalskaya heads the preparation of students in “Media and visual design”.*

It is necessary to mention the big role of the art gallery and the activities that were organized there by Tatyana Bemel. I recollect Olga Sazykina who taught students of all specialties of the department to open up and think artistically assigning non-standard performance tasks in the gallery. It was a conscious decision not to let designers start using mechanisms and computers. At first the students had to understand composition, chromatics, typographics, to try everything with their own hands, to draw, and only then to move to computer design. Students really loved the painter Arlen Mikhailovich Kashkurevich who taught at the department together with his sons.



Students of the arts faculty

Arts department's specific feature was always its populousness and scale. There was a moment when the department made one-fourth of the whole university judging by the number of the students who studied at the department. Moreover, one should keep in mind that the specialty “Art History” is a very limited area for various reasons, firstly, because of the absence in Belarus of the normal market with a demand for classical art critics, experts with the knowledge of foreign languages, organizers of art projects and galleries. Our market was limited to the Arts Museum, and I think that it should be grateful to us for providing our creative graduates. I can see that many events organized by the Art Museum somehow differ from others bearing the EHU creative spirit.

It seems to me that the tourist industry also greatly appreciated specialities prepared by us. It is sufficient to say that you studied at EHU and even if you have not received your diploma yet you get employed: fine knowledge of two foreign languages, good computer skills and modern vocational training ensured our students' competitiveness”.



T. Shchitsova, editor-in- chief of the magazine "Topos"

Professor Tatyana Shchitsova: "A young scientific community was formed at EHU, and it was capable of realizing their initiatives. After all, one needs time to develop an initiative and more time to realize it. But if a person has 4 classes per day or 20 classes per week, the idea to publish a magazine will simply not occur to him by definition because of the self-preservation instinct. Already in our university senior years and in the BSU postgraduate school we got together, held research seminars and started to form the Belarusian humanitarian community. However, only at EHU this initiative received institutionalized support. The philosophical-culturological center was set up, and we organized some seminars, including international ones. At some point, when we already had some history and gathered an open inter-university group of young researchers, we understood that we could try to publish a magazine. Gradually the constant circle of "Topos" authors moved to EHU. Taking into account the considerable age of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences and of the BSU department of philosophy it is amazing that out "Topos" is the first and so far the only academic periodical on philosophy in Belarus".

This period of the university development is characterized by the formation of a whole system of research centers (Institute of German Studies, Center of Gender studies, American Studies Center headed by the best-known Belarusian expert in this area Professor Yu.V. Stulov, Center of Scandinavian Studies, etc.); "summer schools" and regular student conferences are held; scientific activities acquire steady institutional forms. EHU starts publishing the only academic philosophical-cultural journal Topos in Belarus. Tatyana Shchittsova is its founder, permanent editor and constant author. It testifies to the scientific potential of the university, to the formation at the university of scientific schools (first of all, in the fields of phenomenology and cultural studies) for which the journal becomes a place of approbation of scientific research and dialogue with a wide range of foreign colleagues. A system of scientific activities is formed with new possibilities opening for young researchers who do not have to teach general and non-specialized courses but are encouraged to work out original special courses based on their own scientific research.



In the publishing house office

№ 1, 2000
 феноменологически
 философские термины
 ницшеглазами
 состояния мысли
 метаморфозы
 топография культуры
 аннотации рецензии сообщения

However, there is nothing amazing about the publication of this journal as well as a great number of other scientific papers by the EHU publishing house as this was taken care of by people who were dedicated to the ideas of the university, who shared its concepts and were professionals under the guidance of Lyudmila Malevich. Working with them has always been a true pleasure. One cannot imagine a university scientific-educational complex without this structure. Besides, at that time the European Humanities University becomes a true university, groping for a golden mean between the principles of a higher educational establishment and academy: between pedagogical work and scientific research. If in traditional universities classical scholars spend a lion's share of their time teaching, trying to allocate a miniscule amount of time to science (or to imitate some scientific activity), and in the Academy they are engaged in pure research distancing themselves from regular pedagogical activity, at EHU we tried (and quite successfully!) to combine science and teaching in one university complex.



A. Pigalskaya, L. Gusakovskaya, A. Ousmanova, G. Minenkov, O. Shparaga

State universities treated EHU's successes and fast evolution with some jealousy, though EHU actually was not their competitor. At first very few teachers take risks and start working at EHU on a permanent basis while many work both at EHU and at the BSU and at the Institute of Foreign Languages and in other universities, but gradually the body of teaching staff is formed. They are the people who believed in EHU and planned to link their careers with it. Teaching and employee staff is dynamically replenished by EHU former students (somewhat like a program of import replacement). After all, many disciplines taught at EHU had not been taught anywhere else in Belarus. At some point in time our young teachers could already replace foreign lecturers. There grows a third teaching generation of the university complementing it to the full "intergenerational" triad comprised of its graduates of student and master educational programs, EHU doctoral students of the first and second generation: N. Gusakovskaya, A. Denishchik, V. Konstantyuk, A. Krivolap, A. Pigalskaya, I. Poleshchuk, E. Tolstik, A. Filatov, I. Hatkovskaya and others. These "grandchildren" of the EHU community entirely or to a great extent grew up in the open academic space of our university. They constantly take part in international research and educational projects, work with the latest scientific literature and organize diverse creative practical work in the student environment outlining the contours of true European academic culture in Belarus. Besides, EHU serves not simply as an educational institution but also becomes the center of professional teaching international cooperation. Young teachers and research workers from all the countries of the former Soviet Union start meeting within the framework of different activities (in particular, summer schools which have been held annually since 1997). The schools aroused great interest which has been sustained until today as this tradition now continues in Vilnius.

The practice of inviting visiting professors begins to take place on a systematic basis. Visiting lecturers give lectures which are part of the university curricula. Some of them come for a long term and work at EHU on a permanent basis. After all, in their time universities were created as universal spaces. Transfer of teachers and students from one university to another was historically the basic form of university life. EHU, likewise, always aspired to develop the traditions of an open institution. Therefore, naturally, international programs occupied a serious place in the curricula, and invitations of visiting lecturers were initiated within the framework of these programs. Instructors came not only from the countries of Western Europe, but also from Central European countries and Russia. There were very intensive contacts, which started to be established when the would-be founders of EHU still worked at the BSU department of the history of philosophy that was run by A. Mikhailov. For example, we maintained relations with many Russian colleagues through the director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences Academician V. Stepin, who was an old colleague of A. Mikhailov when working in Minsk. Among other well-known Russian instructors who came to EHU were professors Osipov, Kravchenko, Rutkevich. Their work was paid for by EHU at the expense of the support which it had, in particular, from the Soros fund. The fund's financial assistance was vital for the university. Sometimes professors were offered remuneration equal to that which was accepted in their countries. Sometimes they came more for humanitarian reasons, especially when they were the teachers who already knew the university. They agreed to come under the condition of recovery of the most necessary expenses – accommodation and board, working actually without any honoraria as was, for example, the case with two TEMPUS programs. What is more important is that those who came were already instructors with a solid reputation who were well-known in their respective areas and not just foreigners as might sometimes be the case.

V. Dunaev, B. Topornin, A. Mikhailov, K. Beyer, V. Balakirev





T. Bembel, director of the EHU art gallery



At the library of the German studies Center

Irina Stalnaya, EHU teacher, “I taught the new course “Management of cultural projects” the syllabus of which had to be worked out and implemented. The teacher was given a free hand, and work was evaluated according to the results of classes.

Later I also taught other subjects: a special course of “Problems of research of Russian avant-gard” and special terminology in French. Trust in the teacher was difficult to overestimate. Having experience in organizing art projects and quite serious connections in the art world, I had great opportunities at EHU to realize numerous international programs which then and even more so today can hardly be imagined anywhere else in Belarus. Rector’s office, the department administration, the university art gallery, the laboratory of visual arts enthusiastically supported everything which at times, especially at first sight, seemed unrealistic and difficult to implement. As a result in a few years we managed to hold a great number of events which were interesting, useful and important not only for students and teachers of the university, but also for the wide public of Belarus. One of them was the international project “The Vitebsk art school”. Within the framework of this project it became possible to invite with guest lectures the world-known Russian avant-gard expert Andrey Nakov; Alain Fleischer, a well-known artist, photographer, writer, director, author of more than a hundred documentary and feature films, director of the Studio National des Arts Visuels, Le Fresnoy; Clair Le Faul, author of the book about the Vitebsk school (the book “Vitebsk art school (1897–1923)” was published by EHU in 2007). It is remarkable that Fleischer left Belarus with warmest feelings. “Most of all I was impressed by the magnanimity and generosity of the people, their friendliness, inquisitiveness, desire to learn something new, modesty, attentiveness to other people as such qualities are very rare. I travel a lot, so I can compare. You won’t find deafness and lack of interest towards another person here, people here are interested when they carry out a dialogue.

I discovered for myself big artists who are distinguished by their talent and patience. They deserve to be known outside of Belarus. This recognition has already begun. I think it needs to be reinforced”, said Alain Fleischer before his departure from Minsk in his interview to the newspaper “Izvestia”.

Most of those who have visited our country at the invitation of EHU or within the framework of the projects organized at the initiative of EHU left the country with similar feelings. We had a possibility to organize meetings with artists, researchers, actors, film directors, to hold seminars and soirees, exhibitions, film screenings and performances. However, nobody ever thought about how simple it was for EHU to solve organizational issues at the administrative level. The main thing was to present a qualitative project. Students were always among the participants: they learnt things, got experience and made their own contribution to the common cause.

For foreign partners for whom reputation was always extremely important, the “EHU” brand name always seemed to be the most reliable in the Republic of Belarus. This is not a minor argument when one is to think about the successful development of international cooperation. Today it is very painful to realize that after the closing of the university it is impossible to carry out much of what have been planning while the prospects that have only recently seemed to be realistic, have been postponed for an uncertain period.

Certainly, you feel enormous nostalgia, you have a feeling that you have lost some part of your life, and most importantly you understand how much could have been done. . . Besides, the atmosphere of creative freedom and mutual understanding and surprising relations with students and teachers have disappeared, and now we recollect this as a happy moment of our biography with gratitude.”



In the library reading hall

This period of the university development coincided with the general decline of the Soviet reproductive model of education and transition to the model focused on the formation of productive, creative thinking on the basis of wide use of active forms of the organization of educational process. In the former educational system the holy duty of the student had been to attend lectures, to be registered in the attendance register and then to present the digest of what was heard at the lectures at the examination. All truths had already been stated by classics, so it was necessary only to memorize the basic definitions and to make a slight comment on separate issues. The main tendency in teaching was to reduce the teacher to the function of to a loud-speaker installed in the classroom to broadcast without any deviations from the party-ministerial scenario. The same function had to be mastered by the students at the examination as well. The system as such was quite efficient. The only problem was that its efficiency had nothing to do with the quality of education. More likely the system carried out the training of loyalty, it taught the ability to believe everything non-critically, to submit to ideological and bureaucratic norms, to be a part of the system, not to go beyond the limits and to reproduce what they wanted you to reproduce. Many students studied in order to pass examinations of a specific teacher instead of learning something for themselves. This system is embodied in the saying, "Students live cheerfully from one exam session to another."

EHU students cease "to live cheerfully" as they get ready for classes where one cannot simply sit quietly because the number of lectures in their pure form has been minimized.

EHU professor Grigory Minenkov: "When it comes to the attitude towards youth I have to argue with some colleagues who would like to have students dressed differently, with their hair brushed and made. Let them do their hair the way they like! I have been amazed for a long time: you look at these girls and boys incredibly dressed, looking strange, and the question arises, "What are they going to do at the university?!" But you come into the classroom; hear how well they know what they are speaking about. . . and you are filled with wonder. I understood that they are different, they are free. And, thank God, nobody chases them telling them what width their pants should be".



The conference on human rights

Till late in the evening students sit in the library and write; they write presentations, abstracts, essays, and course papers because various written forms of reporting have become the basic means of testing knowledge. Instead of vivid imagination and psychological attacks of oral answers at the examination on a kind of Doomsday students get regular exercises in accuracy of formulations and in structuring their material. Writing at once reveals the degree of the student's knowledge of the problem and logical abilities. However, this does not mean that only exhausted and glossed over young people study at EHU.

For the first time in Belarus EHU starts to make use of the experience of the European process of higher education reforming and creates a much more flexible and variable credit-modular system of training. A system of accumulative grades is introduced allowing to evaluate all the work of the student during the semester using various parameters (active participation during classes, oral presentations and written work, etc.). So the Soviet student's "scourge", i.e. examination, almost turns into a formality of giving the student his mark that has been earned not during a couple of days of wearisome preparation in a semiconscious condition before the examination but through measured and thoughtful work throughout the whole semester.



T. Shchitsova, V. Furs

Independent work of students is placed into the focus of methodological attention. Many departments transform the syllabi of training courses into multi-page instructions defining topics and materials for each week of study, basic and additional literature, questions for self-check, etc. The teacher in the classroom does not retell the whole material but rather carries out a preliminary survey, gives out “a map of the educational route”, interprets “symbols” and lets the students to “orient themselves in the area” independently. Then the teacher advises on the passed “route” (both during the seminars and the more advanced forms of individual consultations and tutorship). It individualizes knowledge and makes it much more fascinating. In this respect a Soviet student is similar to a Japanese tourist who is engaged only in collating the pictures in the guide with real places of interest, strictly following the group route, while EHU students, if left in, say, Rome, will immediately disperse in search of their favorite places, their own Rome.

New unprecedented prospects have opened up for EHU students. Almost at once there were possibilities to take a training course abroad. But there were also those who were puzzled and lost and did not master the programs which indeed were really full of content and demanded exclusive working capacity. “Overloading” was one of the most frequent complaints that we heard from yesterday’s schoolchildren who were unaccustomed not so much to the big volumes of new material as to the very format of receiving it.

Vladimir Furs, EHU professor: *“Students in EHU like in any other university are different, and one should not idealize them. There were those who could be considered ballast. But there were also many strong students, and the possibility of individual work with them opened prospects for better education. On the whole, if one is to compare the levels, for example, of philosophical education in EHU and in BSU, then, in my opinion, it was considerably higher in EHU. Similarly, it is possible to speak about a higher quality of knowledge of all EHU students. The basis for such judgments is that the study of disciplines was to a great extent carried out in the source language; students were included into international educational and research projects, and they developed a panoramic idea about the current condition of humanities.”*



A. Ousmanova is presenting diplomas to graduates of master's gender studies program

Alexander Kolbasko, dean of the EHU arts faculty: *“Both study and work at EHU mean constant overloads, dramas, problems, a difficult schedule, and only unusually strong students managed to study at the university. Two languages, plus a specialty, plus an uneven schedule and lack of premises had been our constant “headache” in Minsk. But people seldom complain about this. Those who were compelled to be transferred to other Belarusian university after EHU was closed in Belarus felt lost in another dimension and could hardly get used to the new rhythm of life. It was critically difficult – almost up to the limit – to study at EHU. But where it is critically easy to study, it is not interesting. At EHU it was interesting.”*



First graduates of the faculty of economics (dean A. Bakanov)

Together we learnt to overcome difficulties, and at the end of the road we saw educated, self-assured, successful young people, bright individualities. Graduation ceremony was a kind of “demonstration performance” of EHU students. Many people remember how it was usually done in state educational establishments.



Dean of the faculty of psychology G. Kuchinsky is presenting diplomas to first graduates



Students

The ceremonies were inherently formal protocol events when the dean gathers everybody and very quickly in a tongue twister manner says the surnames without even giving the first names. Students sign the register sheet and take their diplomas. In EHU the graduation ceremony was organized in a solemn, “Cannes”-like manner. The building of the Yanka Kupala theatre or the House of Writers was rented for this purpose; the stage was decorated in an EHU style; the deans and the graduates came onto the stage, and the students were presented their diplomas in a ceremonial manner. The deans found special words of reminiscences and good wishes for each of the students. The graduates looking like a diplomatic corps spoke reciprocal speeches displaying refinement, learning and wit. It was all unusually emotional and festive. Those were the climactic moments during the EHU existence in Minsk.



In general, EHU managed to create conditions necessary for the citizens of Belarus to receive the highest quality education specifically in our country, to enable Belarus graduates not to go abroad but to study and work in Belarus and to put knowledge alongside with talent and lust, the two things which, according to the well-known expression, are impossible to fake.

At the beginning of the 21st century even the official ratings showed that EHU took first place among non-state universities and second after the BSU among state universities. Competition among enrolling students grows every year. Instead of three rooms in the Academy of Sciences with which the educational base of the new university began, the university was getting ready to build its own building, the means had already been found and the project was ordered. EHU moves forward like a cruiser...

ЕГУ: закрыть нельзя аттестовать

Власть не ослабляет давление на единственный негосударственный университет страны

СКАНДАЛ НЕДЕЛИ

Вокруг ЕГУ назревает международный конфликт

На прошлой неделе Европейский гуманитарный университет оказался в центре назревающего скандала. Министр образования Александр Радков в личной беседе предложил ректору Европейского гуманитарного университета Анатолию Михайлову подать в отставку. Впрочем, свое недовольство ЕГУ господин министр выразил еще раньше — в декабре прошлого года на открытой коллегии Министерства образования он упрекнул университет в том, что он приглашает слишком много преподавателей из-за рубежа и тем самым превращает учебное заведение в проходной двор.

По словам профессора Михайлова, предложение министра он не принял. Да и решать кадровые вопросы в негосударственном вузе Министер-

ство образования не вправе. Еще большую огласку конфликт вокруг ЕГУ получил после того, как на приеме у Александра Радкова побывали послы и представители одиннадцати стран, аккредитованные в Беларуси. Официальный пресс-релиз об этой встрече должен появиться уже сегодня, из независимого источника нам передали стенограмму обращения к министру послов Франции, Великобритании и Северной Ирландии, ФРГ, Италии, Швеции, Чехии, США, Польши, Словакии, Литвы, Латвии, Эстонии.

По словам послов, Беларусь располагает превосходными университетскими кадрами и университетами, поэтому факт «осуждения привлечения иностранных преподавателей белорусскими университетами» очень тяжело воспринят, в част-

ности французским университетским сообществом. Вель «наличие независимых от политической власти университетов является показателем существования демократических свобод в той или иной стране». Поэтому, по мнению представителей двенадцати стран, любые препятствия и сложности, создаваемые для работы университета, будут иметь самые негативные последствия для имиджа Беларуси.

На прощание дипломаты напомнили министру образования, что за его деятельностью во главе министерства наблюдает «почти миллионное население как минимум 26 стран мира, которые мы представляем. Беларусь больше нуждается в этих странах, нежели они нуждаются в Беларуси».

Надежда БЕЛОХВОСТИК.

INTERLUDE: Closing of the University in Belarus

ТЕМА НЕДЕЛИ

БЕЛОРУССКАЯ ГАЗЕТА 2 ФЕВРАЛЯ 2004г. 13

авторитеты

ГРИГОРИЙ МИНЕНКОВ: «МЫ НАДЕЕМСЯ НА РАЗУМНЫЙ ПОДХОД»

Обстановка в ЕГУ во многом зависит от позиции деканов - руководящей элиты любого вуза. О настроениях среди студентов и преподавателей, об образовании европейского уровня корреспондент «Белорусской газеты» Максим Жбанков беседует с деканом философского факультета Григорием МИНЕНКОВЫМ.



Когда и как вы узнали о возможном уходе академика Михайлова?

- Ректор собрался в командировку и уже должен был выехать в аэропорт, когда его вызвали к министру. Вечером 21 января мы узнали, что ректор получил предложение об отставке без объяснения причин. Он не подписал заявление и, естественно, должен был всё осмыслить. Мы обсудили эту информацию на следующий день и приняли решение ждать ректора, чтобы услышать его реакцию. В воскресенье, после возвращения ректора из командировки, мы услышали его версию случившегося и высказали свои мнения о том, что не считаем возможным такое резкое решение. Для ректора была важна оценка коллектива.

- Насколько я знаю, вы уже в пятницу приняли к студентам...

- 22 января на ректорате был поставлен вопрос, каким образом реагировать, как информировать преподавателей и студентов, чтобы держать ситуацию под контролем. Я и, насколько я знаю, другие деканы просили студентов реагировать спокойно. Это молодежная аудитория, в ней возможны самые разные реакции. Мы объяснили, как было реальное событие, их право на образование нарушено не будет, они в любом случае получат высшее образование. Если будет со-
...м пазивать ситуацию...

«Это молодежная аудитория, в ней возможны самые разные реакции»

- В какой мере можно говорить об общей позиции студентов и преподавательского состава?

- Студенты связали себя с этим университетом, и если, например, они будут вынуждены переходить в другие вузы, это действительно, вызовет у них

ют свое мнение, это все-таки взрослые люди. Понятно при этом и активность факультета философии. Для нас Анатолий Арсеньевич не просто ректор. Он неформальный лидер, основатель философской школы, в которой объединились очень сильные исследователи.

- Как, на ваш взгляд, могут развиваться события?

- Надеемся на разумный подход. Дело в том, что мы без конца проходим всякого рода контроль, проверки. Мы понимаем очень строгое отношение к негосударственным или частным вузам. Действительно, бывают разные факты. Но нам не высказано каких-либо серьезных замечаний как учебному заведению. Очень надеемся, что будет учтено: наш университет полностью соблюдает законодательство, мы выполняем все требования Министерства образования, работаем на наше белорусское общество, на укрепление нашей государственности. Мы платим достаточно большие деньги за аренду, платим налоги, не получаем зарплату от государства. Кроме того, привлекаем в страну валютные средства. Следует учитывать, что в нашем небольшом университете примерно 85 студентов занимаются бесплатно, за счет зарубежных доноров. Это обходится в весьма большую сумму - насколько я знаю, более \$80 тыс. в год. Да, мы существуем на зарубежные гранты, но известно, что их не так легко получить, это очень жесткая конкуренция. Мы привлекаем средства на образование в нашу страну и для нашей страны - мы ни для кого другого не работаем. Возможно, существует неполная или искаженная информация у тех, кто принимает соответствующие решения, мы готовы встречаться, объяснять, показывать, как работаем. Мы открытый университет.



Students at the lecture

The discontent with heterodoxy had been accumulating for a long time. Checks and "signals" from above came constantly. But thought is like a dream: it is impossible to force someone to think one thing today and another tomorrow. Especially if heterodoxy is treated as a simple ability to think; it is impossible to force a person not to think at all using administrative means.

Olga Vladimirovna Kryzhanovskaya, EHU Senate secretary: *"My first meeting with EHU happened absolutely unexpectedly. For 5 years I had been head of the department of higher educational establishments inspection of the Ministry of Education of Belarus. Once I was told, that, despite a rather traditional Soviet system of education, there was one university which was trying to do something new, to develop its own model, its own syllabi. Also it was necessary to carry out the procedure of accreditation of the given educational institution. Accreditation procedure took place in the conditions of disbelief that private universities can provide education at the level that would meet state requirements. The above-mentioned higher educational establishment was applying for the university status (and it, really, became the only non-state higher educational establishment which received the university status recognized by the state!). The certifying commission of experts was being formed from representatives of different educational institutions. At that point we found out that EHU has specialties and authorial academic courses which were quite difficult to evaluate. So experts had to be collected actually from the whole country, from different places, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the theological seminary, from state universities, from government bodies, all in all about 80 people. Some problems arose because a number of disciplines were taught in foreign languages. Where in our country can we find a teacher of general and special disciplines in different spheres of professional training, who also has a fluent, almost professional command of the European languages? Especially if the courses are taught not only in English, but in German or French? It was a whole epic to find such experts!*

It is equally impossible to allow contradictions in judgments or to make dull jokes (probably, the statement of the Minister of Education about EHU as a "yard with a through passage" was such a dull?)

For a long time EHU could allow itself not to notice the state. Problems started when it became impossible not to pay attention to the state anymore, it began to interfere more actively in culture and education (maybe because it had already put economics in order). We were getting slowly deprived of all the privileges of an experimental university. During the 12 years of its functioning in Belarus, EHU developed a special culture of affable communication with state bodies, first of all with the Ministry of Education. EHU administration and methodologists tactfully and carefully introduced supervising officials and inspectors (there were plenty of them) to the essence of things, explained the specificity and methodology of education. On the other hand, they tried as formally as possible to bypass those norms and requirements which contradicted the European spirit of EHU and threw it back into the old system of education. First of all, it concerned original authorial course syllabi instead of standard ones, variability of curricula and syllabi, peculiarities of the concept and practice of student language training, ratios of lectures and seminars as forms of teaching in favor of the latter, the use of tutorials as an effective form of creative educational dialogue, the developed system of independent work, etc. Facing the necessity to receive a license to issue state diplomas, to go through certification of departments and so forth it became necessary to organize everything skillfully so as not to come into any obvious contradiction with state requirements (or it will be more correct to say, with indiscriminateness in state universities regarding all these innovations). For a certain period EHU and the Ministry had been getting along quite well: the high level of preparation of students at EHU and EHU's contribution to the reform of higher education in Belarus was obvious.

There were even cases when professionals from the Ministry, familiarizing themselves with the work of EHU from within and in detail during their checks, then started to work at EHU. Neither we, nor they regretted it later. University scientific secretary Olga Vladimirovna Kryzhanovskaya, who was capable of turning any humanitarian chaos into the harmony of plans and reports, added aristocratism of form and remarkable solidity to the university's organizational core.

Рейтинг частных вузов

1. Европейский гуманитарный университет
2. Минский институт управления
3. Институт управления и предпринимательства
- 4—5. Институт современных знаний
- 4—5. Белорусский институт правоведения
6. Международный институт трудовых и социальных отношений
7. Белорусский коммерческий институт управления
- 8—11. Институт предпринимательской деятельности
- 8—11. Женский институт «Энвила»
- 8—11. Международный гуманитарно-экономический институт
- 8—11. Институт парламентаризма и предпринимательства
12. Могилевский финансово-экономический институт



Students at the lecture

Olga Vladimirovna Kryzhanovskaya, EHU Senate secretary: *I even remember that in the course of checking the works written by students one of the experts had to ask his own daughter for assistance as she knew the foreign language better than he did. The experts' attitude and mood changed absolutely after they had communicated with the teachers, got acquainted with curricula, visited classes, and in general watched how the work was organized. Final reviews about the university were most positive and at times rapturous!*

But gradually the requirements to the education system in the country changed. The attitude to academic freedom became stricter. There appeared educational standards which meant a rigid regulation. Actually, if earlier the international system of accreditation had presupposed joint work of an educational institution and an expert commission, work in the standards inspection stopped being joint work with a higher educational establishment but became the controlling body work. The university was required to observe all the standards strictly, follow them all as well as the documents which were prepared by the Ministry of Education and which were at times inconsistent and of poor-quality. It especially concerned private educational institutions.

Rigid state educational standards were imposed on EHU for each specialty offered. There was a rigidly defined number of credit hours, severe requirements concerning the content of the courses, a strictly defined list of specialties, and a standard curriculum. The block of compulsory disciplines was growing bigger while the percentage of time for original courses decreased sharply.

A number of requirements were simply absurd and led to absurd actions of higher educational establishments. For instance, instead of focusing on modern forms of getting information and the Internet use, universities were required to have one million copies of books in their libraries. I remember that in order to fulfill this requirement some educational institutions had to retrieve books of nearly the Stalin epoch which were already obsolete but were used for statistics. Such indicators did not add anything to the activities of the educational institution, but instead it gave the state an opportunity to put pressure on it upon every little occasion."

EHU "Mom"-commissioner was Tatyana Evgenievna Galko who worked not only as the vice-rector for academic affairs but also did so much for the big EHU family that was something like self-sacrifice, and all of us were really her big family.

EHU pro-rector Tatyana Galko: *"At first I was invited by the EHU heads, my old colleagues and good acquaintances from the time at the BSU, to organize some sort of audit before the forthcoming university accreditation. I went around, checked, beginning, as usual, with the documentation. I wrote everything down and came to the meeting of the administration to inform about all the shortcomings I had identified. That particular participation in the administration meeting was my first strong and unexpected impression about EHU. It seemed to me that I was saying all the correct things about how everything should be organized in a higher educational establishment, but at the same time I felt the ironic attitude of everyone present at the meeting. I thought that it was simply self-defense like that of everyone who is being checked. Then irritation started to grow within me: what is happening, it is as though they did not care about what I am saying! When the discussion of my question was finished I was told that if I wanted I could stay till the end of the meeting. I became intrigued: well, let's have a look at what you yourselves are like, where such a "high opinion" comes from? But when I heard what and how they discussed during the administration meeting I understood their attitude to the words of the supervising person which had surprised me so much. Everything that was checked, all of those documentary formalities, were on the periphery of their attention, they were secondary (to put it softly) in relation to the real life of EHU . . . Working at the Ministry I knew all largest higher educational establishments, and I as a person who had worked in the system of higher education my whole life was amazed by the grandness and seriousness of EHU plans. I had not expected to see such things in a small non-state institution. With all my remarks I simply saw myself as a dwarf in the country of giants. Those were systemic projects to reform higher education, international cooperation, and fascinating programs of fundamental scientific research. I had believed that most likely non-state schools would try to teach students in a more or less normal way, to adhere to some standard requirements in order to get accredited, and to survive, but it seemed that in principle they were not interested in anything else. And if it did interest them, then it was only a formality to report back. At EHU I saw people living with the idea of new education. Those were the ideas of a real university with high-quality educational programs and research activity that could meet the highest international standards, the ideas of a university which I, as a university employee with a long experience, could only dream about!*

The second thing that amazed me was the form of the discussion. In no way did it resemble all the meetings in the rector's office that I knew. It seemed to me that there was some exorbitant, unlimited democracy in it, and at first it even reminded me of a market and not a serious meeting at the rector's, which all of us had been accustomed to through the experience of state institutions. But while continuing to listen attentively, I understood that it was more similar to a debate club where someone was conspicuous by tremendous logics of reasoning, clarity of argumentation, someone else by wit. Serious things were productively discussed, but there was no shade of boredom, formalism and servility in relation to the management. Nothing of the kind! It was more like a club of intellectuals and like-minded people. What we got to understand as a top-management meeting at the rector's office could in no way suit this magnificent intellectual, witty activity, which was at the same time extremely rich in content! So the contours of what I named EHU phenomenon began to form."



Protest action (the EHU backyard; V. Dunaev, I. Semko, T. Galko)

Little by little the requirements to follow not only “the letter” but also the essence of regulations for state higher education were becoming tougher and tougher. In 2003 when another wave of Belarusian ideology appeared the situation became absolutely bad. Throughout the whole summer and autumn of 2003 supervising commissions kept coming one after another. They went on checking everything, as Alla Sokolova said, “parallelly, perpendicularly, vertically, horizontally – including all the parameters”. We were required not only to follow all normative documents and ministerial formalities but also to perform some ideological rituals which we, since the times of the USSR, had already forgotten like a bad dream (introduction of special courses on ideology; political briefings explaining the key role of the president in the country’s life; making students join the “correct” youth organizations like Komsomol; restriction of contacts with foreigners and so forth). This is where the reaction of rejection took place on some somatic level.

In 2004, on the eve of the referendum about the third term of the president (actually, about Lukashenko’s unlimited term of rule), we, like the whole Belarusian society, approached the historical cross-roads when Belarusian authorities no longer needed the last forms of imitating European civilization and when the principle “whoever is not with us is against us” began to operate. Probably, feeling that the question of choice for us was clear, the authorities after several precautionary “signals” from above began to make open attempts to bring EHU under their complete control.

Vladimir Dunaev explains a sharp turn in EHU’s destiny not by some momentary mood at the highest levels but by the long escalation of authoritarianism and isolationism in Belarus that simply moved to a new qualitative level. In relation to higher education it means, first of all, “clearing” of all the elements of liberalism and academic autonomy and, secondly, minimization of interaction with Europe, in particular, winding up the Bologna process focused on the creation of the all-European educational space.

Vladimir Dunaev, the first pro-rector and one of the EHU founders: “The Bologna process is a worldly intervention filling in the absence of academic initiative. In Europe they understood that the European higher education is a myth. Something that is good, worthy, and attractive is long in the past. Now that “something” is in all respects at a disadvantage in comparison with Americans, Englishmen, Australians, New Zealanders. It is obvious that people from the countries of the third world, from Africa and Asia, do not want to get a European education, they want to study in the USA. What Americans managed to offer turns out to be much more attractive. Awareness of this loss served as the reason to think over this problem. United Europe pondered over uniform standards in the sphere of education because ideally the EU is a united labor market organized in such a way that people can move freely from one country to another. There should be comparable formal criteria of education that one gets in one’s own country. This is the Bologna process.

When it became clear, that the universities could not do anything – they did not want to change anything – then political decisions pushed Europe to raise all these issues. The Maastricht agreement did not provide for the solution of these questions, it did not even ask them. It specified that higher education is the internal affair of each country. Then all of a sudden and unexpectedly for everyone in 1998 four countries including Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy signed in Sorbonne the Sorbonne declaration “On harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system”. It was an awful scandal! It was awful for two reasons. First of all, because it was regarded as an unexpected interference in what was considered a purely national internal affair. Secondly, those who were not present in Sorbonne were revolted by the fact itself: big countries can decide for us when we have not even been invited and have not been asked?! The declaration was rejected. At the same time France was suspected of instigating big countries to impose their will on the small ones.

But in 1999 representatives of all the countries of the European Union did get together in Bologna. The Bologna declaration was signed. It was already called “On the united European space for higher education:”

Серьезный юбилей

Европейский гуманитарный университет отмечает десятилетие

Нынешний и следующий годы богаты 10-летними годовщинами создания новых институций. Среди организаций, возникших и развивающихся, Европейский гуманитарный университет – единственный в Беларуси негосударственный вуз, имеющий признанный статус университета. Вчера в Милском образовательном центре состоялось торжественное заседание ученого совета ЕГУ, на котором присутствовали многочисленные гости и те, кто стоял у истоков проекта.





Meeting in support of EHU

Vladimir Dunaev, the first pro-rector and one of the EHU founders: *The signees believed that it was not about a unified education system but rather about harmonizing the national and the all-European not to lose cultural specificity but to create the ground for the development of united space for higher education. Later the non-EU member countries started joining the Bologna declaration. Now there are already forty signees including Russia.*

When Russia signed the declaration, immediately there was a question about the space for higher education of Europe. What kind of Europe?! It is already from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, so it is already Eurasia! Readiness to sign the declaration has already been stated by Latin American countries. So it is time to talk about two universal educational systems.

However, it was all done by officials, not by universities. To some extent it was a political decision. The document was signed because they understood that universities themselves would sign nothing. Since 1999 universities have fought against the Bologna model as much as they could. In this sense Belarusians were not an exception. All the arguments used by Belarus opponents of the Bologna model had been said earlier by its European opponents. There was no new idea, no new objection.

Nevertheless, since 1993 the process of moving closer to the Bologna model has been outlined in Belarus. Our university was the leader. Our history was quite instructive. After all, when the university was created in 1992, there was no Bologna process at all. However, we were designing a kind of model which was oriented towards American education. We called our university European but tried to construct it like an American university with two stages – the bachelor level and the master level. We understood that this model is the most promising one allowing graduates to fit more dynamically in the new requirements that are necessary for representatives of different professions at the labor market not limited to the borders of separate states.

The Belarusian system was not built into the western model. EHU organically fit in the Bologna model that differed from ours not by its definition of bachelor or master but by real university autonomy and academic freedom which some university communities possessed though they did not accept the Bologna model and reacted to it within the limits of the freedom they had. In any case, it became a subject for academic discussions.

At first there was a moment when the Ministry of Education hoping that Belarus would not be the only “black hole” in the course of higher education internationalization, showed interest in what we were doing. We were invited to discuss these issues. So many meetings were held! We had something to say because we had begun this work at the end of 1999, and the Ministry got involved only in 2002.

And then the course towards the purposeful self-isolation of the country was taken. Any attempts to break through were considered an intention to ruin our uniqueness. In 2003 they started to play everything back and, consequently, Belarus turned out to be the only country which frankly declared itself to be out of the Bologna process. For obvious reasons it coincided with the acceptance of the concept of ideologization of the educational process. This is also easily explainable.

After the 2001 presidential elections it became clear that the youth does not support the president. There are data how the BSU students voted. And it is even worse that the teachers who were part of the commissions counted “incorrectly”! Then they must have understood that it is a bomb which has not blown up yet but they clearly heard the ticking of the clockwork. Before the 2001 elections higher education was the sphere where liberalization could still take place to some extent. After the 2001 elections the idea of the existence of “oppositional” universities was clearly identified; they had to be “dealt with” and the rectors of such institutions had to be “replaced” at any rate.”



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ДРУГОЕ БУДУЩЕЕ

Об особенностях учебы в ЕГУ, о специфике вуза мы беседуем с советником проректора по учебно-воспитательной работе Виталием ЕРМОЛОВИЧЕМ.

— Реформирование высшего образования Беларуси осуществляется с учетом опыта наиболее актуальных изменений, которые происходят сегодня в образовании большинства стран мира. Идея ЕГУ состоит как раз в том, чтобы способствовать интеграции высшей школы республики в европейское образовательное пространство. В связи с этим университет ведет эксперимент по адаптации европейских образовательных стандартов к национальной модели высшего образования. Поэтому особенностью подготовки в ЕГУ является обязательное изучение двух иностранных языков. Кроме английского языка наши студенты изучают по выбору немецкий, французский или итальянский

языки. Однако, обучая иностранным языкам, ЕГУ решает несколько иные задачи. Мы не готовим филологов. Наша цель — подготовить правоведов, психологов, дизайнеров или экономистов, которые смогут свободно использовать иностранные языки в своей профессиональной деятельности. Два года назад ЕГУ был принят в образовательный консорциум Sapirius Europe, который объединяет университеты 11-ти европейских стран. Цель консорциума — обеспечить возможность свободного перемещения студентов в пределах европейского образовательного пространства. В рамках проекта каждый студент сможет провести два семестра в одном из зарубежных вузов. Естественно, что это возможно только при условии свободного владения иностранными языками. Уже в этом году лучшие

прочные знания добавляются собственным трудом. Именно поэтому в ЕГУ большое внимание уделяется организации самостоятельной работы. В отличие от студентов других вузов, наши студенты выполняют значительно большее количество письменных работ творческого или исследовательского характера, причем с каждым из них проводится индивидуальная работа.

Европейский гуманитарный университет в этом году отметит 12-летие. За годы своего существования он приобрел репутацию престижного вуза, который дает качественное образование. Выпускники ЕГУ востребованы не только в стране, но и за рубежом.

ния. ЕГУ постлода как грамматический лексический сит и студ уш ме бо ли не по, бек воу сн ме пт чтс кт



Outset

INTERLUDE: Closing of the University in Belarus



Lecture on human rights

Franz Kafka's "The Trial" begins as follows: "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested. . . . There was immediately a knock at the door and a man entered. He had never seen the man in this house before. . . .

– Who are you? – asked K., sitting half upright in his bed. The man, however, ignored the question as if his arrival simply had to be accepted, and merely replied,

– You rang?

– Anna should have brought me my breakfast, – said K. <...>

– It is not possible.

– It would be the first time that's happened," said K., as he jumped out of bed and quickly pulled on his trousers. . . . And what is it you want, then?

That's something we're not allowed to tell you. Go into your room and wait there. Proceedings are underway and you'll learn about everything in good time".

There is a similar fragment from Sergey Dovlatov's last letter to the department of propagation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia:

"Dear comrade..! You must be taking me for an idiot. What else can explain the nature of your letter? I am asking about the reasons for which my book is not published. You answer, "...For reasons known to you". . . . I confess your formal reply seemed humiliating to me. I will once again explain: literature is the business of my life. You are putting me in a position when I have nothing to lose. Sorry for being so harsh. Yours faithfully, S. Dovlatov. November 12, 1975".

These fragments quite precisely describe our psychological condition and atmosphere of communicating with different officials. The phantom of this Kafkaesque–late-Soviet nightmare came alive again for us in Belarus in the 21st century. We faced the absurd anonymous bureaucratic machine. Come to think of it, it was just the elements, nothing personal, no class rage, no tense ideological commitment in the actions of the people representing power. All the commissions, checks and summons to interviews were like measured inflows and outflows. There prevailed a mechanical fulfillment of some instruction that was not quite clear even to the executing officers. From time to time it was accompanied with an impurity of the sympathetically embarrassed curiosity: "What for is all this? You look like normal people. What is so special that you are doing there?"



G. Minenkov, A. Bakanov, O. Chernyshev

More ladies from the Ministry had been staying in the vice-rector's office for a long time trying to clarify something. They had been sitting in their fur coats getting red from the heat and the futility of their visit, but their response to the offer "not to take a steam bath" and to remove at least their coats was a reserved silence which only strengthened the impression of the awkwardness of the whole event. They hastily left passing through a crowd of EHU employees in the corridor, without looking at people and keeping silence in reply to the employees' rather harmless questions. The people who were closing us did not at all resemble the winners who by the right of the strong and confident were conquering a new territory. They looked more like hasty night bird nest devastators...



In the library reading hall

Vice-rector Tatyana Galko: *“When we defended Mikhailov as the rector, when we protected the ideals of academic freedom and university autonomy, I do not think that anyone believed that s/he was committing a political act or some heroic deed. It was quite natural in our university family but for very many people it did not fit into the general political context. Our academic project was our life. It is impossible for a person with Rhesus negative to have a Rhesus positive blood transfusion – such blood is rejected. EHU as an organism rejected things alien not because of any administrative-political criteria but absolutely informally, so to say, by its immune system.”*

“People from the street” simply could not join EHU as there was a peculiar club system of unwritten recommendations and advice concerning the admission of new members of the community. Thus, we could not even imagine that such a person would not only become our colleague but would also start ordering us around, that the person would not only say different things but even his style and intonation would sound to us like scratching iron on glass.

First of all, EHU was held responsible for what earlier had been perceived quite favorably, namely, its experimental syllabi, introduction of the two-level education system, integration into the context of the European and world education system. However, at the Ministry board meeting in December 2003 the Minister of Education Radkov characterized EHU as a “yard with a through passage”: in his opinion, too many foreign professors gave lectures at EHU (in Milosz Forman’s film “Amadeus” Saglieri made a similar remark to Mozart: according to the court composer, Mozart’s music contained “too many notes”). This “catchphrase” that brought the Minister of Education heroic fame and quite fully expressed the level of the polemic culture of the opposite side clearly defined the initial positions for the attack on EHU. Later this political anti-European home-made beer will be poured into the wineskin of quasilegal forms (first of all, not meeting the standard requirements of classroom provision). But at that point there was “only” (!) the question of changing one person. However, Anatoly Arsenievich was not mistaken about his being the Rector, and for this reason he decided not to give in to pressure and not to resign from his position. After all, according to the well-known expression, the madman considering himself to be king is no madder than the king who believes that he is king. The king is made by his environment but not by specific physiological features (“high blood”) or his own fantasies about it. The king is the sum of the attitudes of citizens towards him as the king. Following this medieval analogy it is possible to say that all EHU personnel actually believed Anatoly Arsenievich to be the Rector. Not a manager who can run any business and be technically replaced by another manager; he was the founding father, the author of the Idea, and the teacher. His decision to retain his position was dictated not by his belief in his own exclusiveness (which is probably more justified than that of the majority of other executives) but by clear understanding that it was vital for the preservation of the system of human relations called EHU. The decision of the EHU team not to hand the rector over in exchange for stability was dictated not by their fanatical fidelity to the Leader, but by their understanding that EHU is we are ourselves and that our attitude to EHU and to the Rector is our attitude to one another and to ourselves. It is the feeling that we are not simply in EHU but also that EHU is in us all as our free choice, a part of our life and not just a place of work.

EHU professor Andrey Gornykh: *“It is a very characteristic fact: I seldom heard students saying, “I will go to the dean” or “the rector said”. As a rule, it was: “I will go to Alla Anatolievna (Sokolova)” or to “Grigory Yakovlevich (Minenkov)”;* it is necessary to consult with “Vladimir Aleksandrovich (Dunaev)” or “Anatoly Arsenievich (Mikhailov)”. It means that nobody could imagine someone else in those positions. EHU is a free academic community which was really analogous with a family, and everything in it was quite organic. Mikhailov or Dunaev in EHU were not only and not so much the surnames but positions. It did not matter what their positions were called formally as we knew that the head of the university was Mikhailov and his right hand was Dunaev. When the Minister of Education offered Mikhailov to resign we simply did not understand what he was talking about. It was like hearing: “Let your daddy be that man, not your daddy. Everything will remain the same, the same carpets and the same pottery in the cupboard; nothing will change; only your daddy will be another man.” You cannot explain to these people that when the person is the founding father of a project like EHU it is not that he opposes himself to the Belarusian state ideology, he just drops out of the logic of the bureaucratic system as such.”

Observing the Rector during that crisis period we felt time and again that under the circumstances it would be optimal for him to give up this administrative position which is madly onerous for a real philosopher. All of us saw how tired Anatoly Arsenievich was – not so much of the exhausting routine of the clandestine struggle but of the burden of non-realized plans, lectures not given, and unwritten books. He would not have had any problems leading a quiet academic life abroad, and it was probably a very tempting decision to simply cut the Gordian knot of all the problems once and for all.

But that close circle of EHU employees who gathered during those January days of 2004 and who physically formed a big circle in the rector's office till late evening waited for the return of Anatoly Arsenievich with his story about the given ultimatum. Again we saw a truly wise person who did not begin to make resolute decisions (to give up everything or lead everyone in the last battle with the boldness of the one doomed to death).

Just one characteristic touch to the story which today is already perceived with slight irony, but at that time we had no time for jokes. After his meeting with the minister Mikhailov took off for his planned business trip and a couple of days later returned to Minsk. Anatoly Arsenievich's students and his closest colleagues decided to meet him at the airport in order not only to support him but also because of fear for our rector's safety. We met the rector and put him not into the university minibus that had arrived but into the car of one of the employees "to cover our tracks" (!). We went not home but at once to the administrative building to make sure that Anatoly Arsenievich should never remain alone and be with people all the time. Such were our "spy games" (!). Obviously Anatoly Arsenievich had not expected to be met in such a way, he was surprised and even allowed himself to speak ironically about the whole event. After the closing of the university academican Mikhailov took no risk of entering Belarus, though – taking into account various unpleasant symptoms (from the rumor about the academican's political ambitions that spread out to a strange robbery of his apartment when fastidious thieves took only Mikhailov's academic awards).

Having safely reached the office, academican Mikhailov gave everybody present balanced and detailed information about the conversation and proposals that suddenly ripened in the head of the Minister of Education. Then Mikhailov began to reflect aloud on the existing situation and ways to deal with it. In the same way as during his lectures when he did not reproduce monologues written beforehand, the practice of life and philosophical practice did not come apart in the critical moment. In the atmosphere of tension but also solidarity we defined for ourselves the limit behind which it was impossible to concede (just to proof your loyalty eat a tea spoonful of dung and then you will have to eat pots of dung ceaselessly), namely, not to give in to "ideology" and not to hand the rector over.

Dean of the EHU law faculty Alla Sokolova: *"Everybody understood that Mikhailov is a signifier, a symbol, a leader. I left the BSU where I had worked at the department of law for sixteen years just because Anatoly Arsenievich carried me away with his idea of reform. Like many others, I went to the university "to join Mikhailov". In 1994 I was a successful associate professor at the BSU department of theory and history of the state and law, had defended my doctor's thesis in Moscow State University, taught interesting subjects, was engaged in the organization of student competitions, student olympiads, schools of young lawyers. It was at that period that I was offered to teach in EHU which I knew nothing about. At that time it seemed to me that my professional carrier was successful. But during one of the seminars I heard Anatoly Arsenievich speak. He addressed the participants with an emotional speech about higher education problems, its isolation from European culture, and the necessity of reformation. The main thing was that we had a possibility to try and do it. If not we, then who would do it? That meeting with Mikhailov decided my "destiny".*



In the EHU art gallery

In reply to the political will to destroy everything built by us we decided to show a philosophical will to live and to think over and collectively realize the non-standard scenario of the preservation of the university. It was decided that the main asymmetric answer to the authorities would be not to run in all directions or for all of us to join the political opposition, but to continue our existence in the same quality. It was decided not to give in to the pressure and provocations but to continue fulfilling our professional and moral duties, to struggle for the quality of education and for the increase of the level of the orientation towards European civilization and openness of Belarusian society. It was imperative to do it even on a better qualitative basis and to organize a free dialogue inside Belarusian society despite "the propensity for fisticuffs that complicates communication" (Dovlatov) on a certain part of society and to continue the game even if you were scored a goal with a brazen violation of rules under the approving shouts of the hired crowd.



V. Dunaev, first vice rector

It is characteristic that immediately after the conversation of rector Mikhailov with the Minister of Education various colleagues and acquaintances began to call EHU teachers and kept asking, “why Mikhailov was fired”, “what you are going to do now” and so forth, referring to the information which they received from the third parties. Everybody spoke about it as an accomplished fact. Thus, at once we started feeling the organized psychological pressure (later there was even more ridiculous gossip about Academician Mikhailov, phone calls to some teachers to think twice before making a decision, etc.). While the university management already understood the gravity of the situation and a full variety of measures which could be applied to us, many EHU employees still up to the very end could hardly believe that everything was so serious and hoped that common sense would prevail.



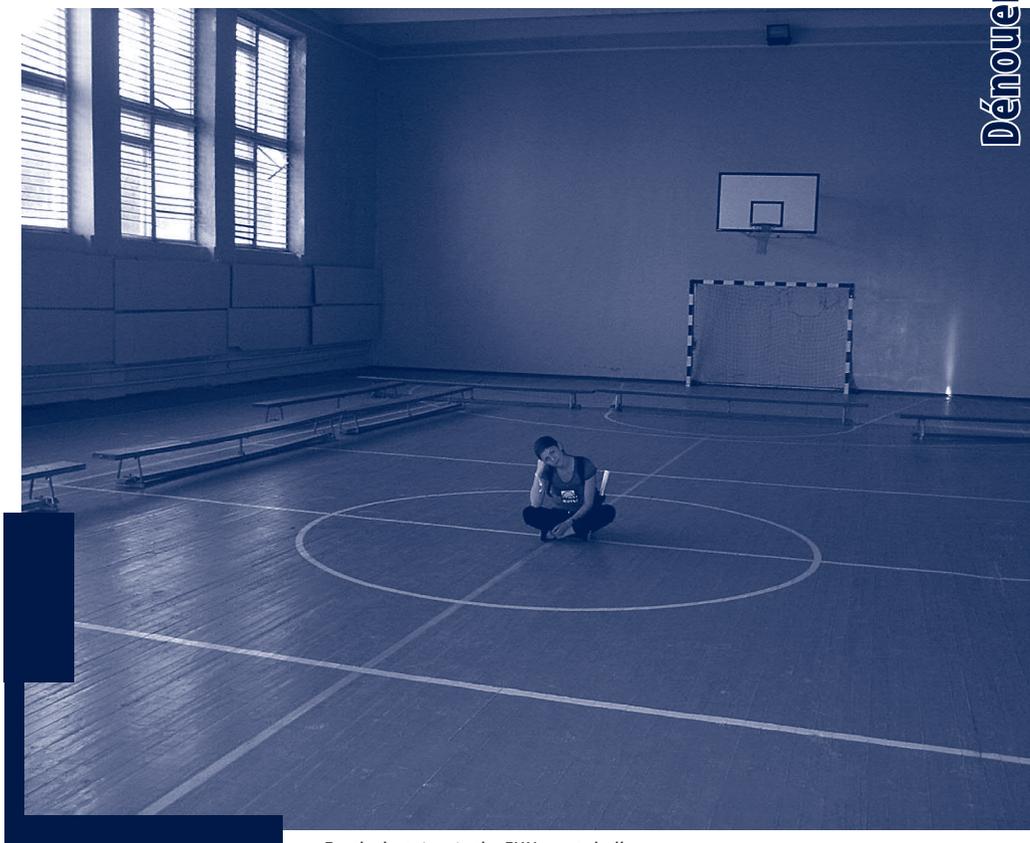
Protest action

EHU vice-rector Tatyana Galko: *“For a time period many of us had a sincere illusion that we would be understood, that they would not dare, and that there were no reasons to close the university. Then we realized that we had lived in some sterile conditions of our community, in a vacuum. We lived by the principles of academic freedom and ethical norms of a university family. It is like living in a megalopolis: one does not need to go out or walk under an umbrella and in general to know what the weather is like outside. But suddenly people had their eyes open, and the people split. There were those who did not go deep into the situation and wanted to continue living in an ivory tower hoping that all the troubles would somehow pass. Some others even accused the university management of their unwillingness to give in, not understanding that we were expected not to concede or to be flexible but to stop being ourselves . . .”*

During that critical period, especially when Academician Mikhailov was compelled to leave the territory of Belarus the leader qualities of the first vice-rector Vladimir Dunaev were fully revealed. He always maintained a readiness of mind (just listen to the philosophical overtones of this turn of speech). He met all the waves of bureaucratic absurdity with an amazing self-control and some Nietzschean cheerfulness (characterizing them as if speaking about gusts of cold wind: “It is so invigorating!”). There is no need to say that it helped to support the psychological climate among the humanists who are inclined to lose heart even with no reason. Remaining on the captain's bridge he symbolized the dignity of the EHU university corporation with honor. How much it must have cost him to make a speech in the spirit of staunch intellectual stoicism before the students and teachers at the last meeting of EHU in a circle of plainclothesmen, in the face of possible provocations and hundreds of emotionally charged people! Only much later did we understand that it was not simply an example of self-control for his colleagues. Like a powerful computer with tremendous efficiency Vladimir Aleksandrovich considered various variants of ways out of the situation, never “getting stuck” because of emotional overheat. Moreover, it was not a tactical way out of the dense encirclement but a strategic way of developing the university in a qualitatively new situation. The results of his foresight and cool confidence in the big safety factor of EHU would become evident already on the Lithuanian ground.

Shortly before the closing of the university the Ministry detained issuing the license to EHU breaking the existing normative rules. This may have been the next step necessary to close the university after the unsuccessful ultimatum to rector Mikhailov. Legally we were prepared and won the license back. It was a moment of a relative triumph. It seemed that there was a gleam of light ahead. But then the authorities stopped simpering with having “heart-to-heart” talks and weaving complex legal tricks; they chose a ridiculously simple and rough measure – to take away the building. EHU had been renting the building for classes from the Administrative office of the President and suddenly the building was urgently required for other purposes, in particular, for the State Control Committee, which was apparently growing excessively and could not fit into its old premises, as well as for some commercial companies... The lease agreement was terminated before the appointed time. By then EHU attempts to construct its own building (financing had been found and there was a ready project) had been blocked at various bureaucratic levels for years. Depriving EHU of its educational premises the Jesuit-like logic of domestic bureaucrats at last formulated the main claim saying that for all that the university did not have adequate facilities (therefore, everything that the university had was taken away), though, according to the norms of classroom provision, EHU was still a problem-free educational institution. EHU was among the better ones on the list of all educational establishments of Belarus including large state educational institutions... If one were to use this ground as the reason then it would have been possible to close quite a few universities (including the BSU, leader of the national higher education, where at that time some faculties had three shifts for students). But by using this “crowbar” they clearly told us, “We have decided to close and we will close”. A political will, isn't it? Neither the démarches of diplomatic missions in Minsk, nor the protests of the international scientific community, nor the petition of Metropolitan Philaret heading the EHU theology department had any importance for this will. That great political will was at first dressed in an obviously short girl's dress of economic claims. The claims are still regularly reiterated in the official press as if copied with the help of carbon paper that are, as a rule, timed to the admission campaigns in the university and called upon to open the eyes of “gullible Belarusians” to “the real essence” of EHU: how can qualitative humanitarian education be provided by a university which besides the shortage of classroom square meters had no conditions for providing hot food (with availability of two canteens in a vicinity of a few dozen meters and a cafeteria at the university, etc.) and experienced a shortage of sporting equipment?!

From the blog of a former EHU student who transferred to the main state educational establishment of Belarus (<http://jennie-hunter.livejournal.com/28953.html>, 19:10, 8/1/08): *“I hate physical education! In our dear EHU everything was so cool: the sports hall with almost no one around and you could choose any ball and play as much as you wanted. And the teacher was miraculously wonderful. Gennady Galimzyanovich, I remember you and I miss you so much! Here it takes forever to get by tram to the other end of the world to the sport's centre “Burevestnik” dragging a backpack with textbooks on the shoulders and a bag with sports shoes and sports suit in the mouth. Besides, this sport centre is like a yard with a through passage with no locks in the locker rooms (nobody is responsible if something gets stolen). And what happens in the hall is a wild horror with crowds of people, balls flying like gun kernels (keep watching not be hit on the head).”* We will not continue the description of the experience through which the student got to enjoy the delights of the surplus of sports “equipment” in comparison with EHU as further lines are even harsher...



For the last time in the EHU sports hall



Meeting in support of EHU

Shortly after the university was closed this will was finally somehow articulated by the head of the state. The word “elite” was the keyword of the national judge and public prosecutor in one person. We will allow ourselves to provide an extended citation from Alexander Lukashenko’s speech on September, 23rd, 2004 in Brest during his meeting with students: “Perhaps, you have heard that supposedly the authorities closed EHU in Minsk. When it was being opened it was a project interesting and attractive to young people and the state: many foreign lecturers came, students could go abroad to study, European diplomas and so on. That was the external facade. But there was also an implicit main idea of preparing here, in Belarus, at the European Humanities University, first of all, the new Belarusian elite which eventually would lead Belarus to the West. So it happened that in the centre of Minsk Westerners were preparing future leaders and the elite. What about other Belarusian higher education establishments in Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Mogilev, let alone the leading ones in Minsk? Who do they prepare: servants, slaves for this elite?”

We do not reject foreign assistance in professional training and student and scientific exchange. But there should be a limit. We suggested that the university organize the educational process in conformity with our educational standards. What is wrong with that? Any state requires that people study according to the standards accepted in the country. Much more so, they are quite good standards, and this is recognized in the West. After all, we gave out state diplomas. The answer was the *démarches* of foreign ambassadors, clamor in the press, and a flat refusal to adhere to Belarusian rules. The result was that the authorities were compelled to revoke the European Humanities University of the license. Now they are considering a question of introducing sanctions against the Minister of Education such as not to allow his entry to Europe, to close his entry and so on. Well, we have already been through this. They had fought against such things when we were closed from them in the Soviet Union and nobody was allowed here. Now they are using precisely the same tactics. And what does our minister have to do with this? This decision had been in the making for a few years...

...They had been warned that in that university they should prepare students in the same way as in Brest and Minsk. If not, then we do not need such a higher educational establishment.” The president finished his summing up of the EHU case in the following manner, “One thing that I can say firmly: we will prepare our elite, the future management of our country ourselves. In our higher educational institutions including regional ones. Both in Brest, and in Baranovich...”

The speech is remarkable, first of all, because what ministerial bureaucrats could not say out loud was said. The decision about closing EHU was made by the top political management (read – by Alexander Lukashenko himself) and not because of the problems with the building or lack of sport equipment: the wrong choice of “orientation” of society, the wrong kind of elite was prepared.

The decision about closing EHU was political.

Secondly, it is really not the substantial but the formal level (the style never lies!) that reveals what is unacceptable at EHU: the spirit of learning, rationality, and logicity.

If the campaign to close EHU began with the phrase of the Minister of Education about “the yard with a through passage”, then now the phrase “many foreign lecturers came” serves as an obviously positive characteristic (up there you should have at first agreed among yourselves on the use of appropriate “concepts”!). Then comes the classical passage about the elite in the genre of well-known presidential improvisations. At first the thesis about the existence of the right and wrong elite is introduced. Then in the president’s speech there appears the link “elite – slaves” meaning that if there is an elite it should have slaves. The fact that between the thesis that “there is the elite” and (accordingly) “there are slaves” there still should be a justified statement that the attributive quality of the elite to have slaves did not prevent our national master of syllogistics from actually bringing us to the conclusion that the elite as such does not correspond to the state ideology of Belarus.



In the normal word use the elite is the most educated, professional and successful part of society. The antonym of the term elite will be not “slaves” but ordinary people (where did slaves come from in the first place? – Most likely, from the Soviet mass subconsciousness that “We are not slaves, slaves are not us”). As such the elite cannot be “right” or “wrong”. The elite is a means of the deepest and complete self-awareness of society as it is the elite that is educated because systematic thinking, analytical skills and ability to see prospects are part of its professionalism. Either it fulfills its civic duty (thinking about prospects), which is the continuation of its professional qualities, or it serves another power group. Either it is the elite or it is not. However, even in this case the authorities say again that a third option is possible; there is the “right”, “its own” elite. It simultaneously attributes anti-elite qualities to this elite. It should be like everybody else (“They had been warned that this university should prepare students the way it is done in Brest and Minsk”).

There should be no difference between the central scientific schools and all the others (“both in Brest and in Baranovichi...”) that shows fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of science and its key role at the university. Science means breakthroughs that are possible upon the concentration of the best forces in strategic directions. And this is not in the scope of bureaucrats; here the decisive factor is academic autonomy, international self-regulation of the scientific community. You may call the educational institution in Baranovichi a university three times but in the foreseeable future it will not become a scientific centre, a place for reproducing the elite (it will prepare quality experts, which is also of great benefit for the country). Finally, Lukashenko actually identifies the “elite” and the “future leadership of our country”. It is clear that in this case the matter cannot be allowed to take its own course. The question about the “successors” is the key question for the current authoritative power. It means “guarantees of personal safety”, guarantees against “redistribution of property”, “control over financial flows”, etc.

Elite is a wider concept than “leadership”. Elite relies, first of all, on moral and professional authority, culture and knowledge. As such, the elite in Russian and Soviet history (from Pushkin and Gogol to Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn) had never been hungry for power. Rather it distanced itself from it often swearing the power for all it was worth (together with “ordinary people”) but loving the country and doing for the country’s future much more than any “leadership”. To a great extent the elite is liberal intelligentsia that is like the society’s protective belt around the struggle for power and property keeping it civilized. It is a protective belt of critical reflection and judgment of taste which surrounds any social group aspiring to speak on behalf of the whole society.

Finally, the elite in the modern world is already a global mobile phenomenon. It ensures the country against short circuits in phantasms of “rural idiocy” (“if it is our own it is the best”). It connects it to the world processes and information flows. Even in Russia nobody considers a foreign professional heading the national property of the country, namely, the national football team, to be a disgrace for the nation or state capitulation. When the result is needed for the whole nation and not just distribution of financial flows among “our guys” professionalism outweighs ideology. And now is the last meeting in support of EHU in August, 2004 in the inner court yard of the university which was similar to a prison courtyard (by means of an iron lattice it was literally blocked by some people who would let everyone enter the courtyard but would not let anyone out).

Vladimir Furs, EHU professor: “President Lukashenko stated clearly and unambiguously the reason for closing EHU. The claim laid to the university was that EHU was engaged in preparing the alternative elite for a future Belarus, which was unacceptable from the point of view of the authorities. Well, such evaluation could be considered a compliment. We really tried to prepare people who could become the elite of a democratic Belarus. I would not claim that we managed to do it completely but such was our aspiration. Probably, “preparing the elite” on the national scale is not a problem to be solved by one university, especially so small that had managed to train graduates only for a few years. But if this frightened the authorities then we were probably quite efficient. I am convinced that many of our graduates can become representatives of the new Belarusian elite. Some of them, even though they are scattered all over the world, keep in touch with one another and link their future with work in their homeland; others see themselves as mobile people working in both Belarus and Europe. But why not? In the modern global world such “nomadic way” is a normal notion.”



Protest action in the backyard

The feeling of anxiety, tension and piercing melancholy as it was probably the last time when we got together... But there was also a feeling of dignity and understanding of the rightness of everybody present.

A few hundred people are singing “Gaudeamus”. Plainclothesmen standing in small groups at some distance enquire in a businesslike manner: “What are they singing? In what language?” Involuntary tears, a lump in the throat during the singing and – the song continues...



Library employees: I. Sirotko, L. Lushchinskaya, T. Ignatyyuk, N. Dubinova, I. Galyamova, Ee. Golovach

After that there was the hardest work to liquidate the consequences of the “ship-wreck” in both volume and the psychological aspect. EHU management and employees could not take care of everybody and everything simultaneously. First of all, they dealt with students and specialists of the updating department whom it was necessary to transfer to other higher educational institutions urgently and before the beginning of the new academic year. It was a huge amount of work! The majority of cases needed to be dealt with on an individual basis. During just a few weeks it was necessary to write out more than a thousand academic certificates (usually the university gave 15 inquiries a year). It is a very complex document which should be checked against the whole history of the student’s study at the university. Heads of divisions, coordinators who knew that most likely tomorrow they would be unemployed wrote out the papers necessary for students instead of taking a holiday and trying to arrange their private lives. Nobody ran away from “the sinking ship” even though everyone knew that the “ship” was doomed. People worked like clockwork. Coordinators came to finish all the matters until the last moment; even if they had already had a different job, they still came and completed everything that had to be done. Probably, only then it became clear to us all that the personnel department of the university headed by Larisa Antonovna Zhuravleva was a really solid rear, though before that the EHU academic community had disliked the papers and formalities! To go through so many changes, reorganizations, transfer of files and documents, extracts and certificates in the conditions of relocation, turmoil and confusion, checks, closing, and then the liquidation process (which, as it turned out, took away as much nerve, time and strength as the relocation to Lithuania!), and during all of this the department managed not only to keep in order the complex paper-documentary matters of the personnel department but also to remain attentive to each request and to show maximum kindness and sympathy! “I have never seen anything like this in my life, - described her impressions later Tatyana Galko, - and if I had read about it in a book I would have said that all of it was made up.”

At the university the matter of utmost importance was the rescue of the unique library carried out by the devotees of the library business led by the library director Natalia Stanislavovna Dubinova. Someone carried boxes, others helped to pack books into them and to load them for transportation to the warehouse where for some time this invaluable treasure could be locked and inaccessible to those who did not understand and appreciate its value.

Subsequently, the library fund which was the envy of many higher educational establishments and libraries would partially be getting dusty in warehouses; another part of it would be made accessible in the maladjusted, cold factory premises temporarily rented by EHU. But our librarians would not turn into the heads of printed matter warehouses. After all, the books are a live matter of Tradition and of humanitarian knowledge, and the librarians would remain the Curators in improbably difficult and sometimes risky conditions supporting and then reviving the library to ensure access to the unique editions in spite of everything.

The EHU Minsk ship kept afloat until the moment when the overwhelming majority of its crew managed to get ashore and get settled, at least temporarily. For many this was not worse than at the university.

The closing of the university was a period of crisis because of politicization of the university which, as a matter of fact, had been imposed on us by the authorities. This way it was easier to legitimize administrative arbitrariness towards students and teachers. The authorities had a ready ideological basis and police technologies pushing out the political opposition. Besides, having a small and ineffective political opposition, they must have needed to create some new internal sources of threat. They were required to justify a total attack on the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Belarus. The inertia of these expectations still generates absolutely inadequate assumptions that EHU in Lithuania is something like a training camp for new “forest brothers”.



*N. Popesku,
G. Malikova,
L. Zhuravlyova,
E. Kovsh, T. Fedyyuk,
L. Malevich*



Alexander Kolbasko, dean of the EHU arts department: *“Our students were admitted by different universities. For example, some students of the department of arts wishing to finish their education that was interrupted by the Belarus authorities and to receive EHU diplomas (art critics, designers and tourists) got settled in Saarbruecken, Berlin and Frankfurt. We went there several times. For the first time it was done to consult the students about their graduation papers. We went there again for the defense of diploma theses and presentation of diplomas. We should point out that a great deal was done by our colleagues from the Institute of German Studies, first of all Peter Liesegang and Tobias Knubben who undertook this project taking responsibility for the destiny of our students. More than fifty students had an opportunity to finish their studies comfortably, to defend their diploma theses, to receive diplomas and even to get a possibility for further studies in Germany or other European countries.*

In Frankfurt students received diplomas of two levels – B.A. and specialists. The compulsory requirement to receive a bachelor's degree was to complete a full four-year cycle of studies at EHU.

The requirement for a specialist diploma it was necessary to take additional distance learning courses and to defend a diploma thesis. Among other students who were taken care of by the arts department were the students of the information technologies department who studied for a year at the Freie Universitaet in Berlin finishing their diploma projects.

We invited Angelika Rude, a professor from Berlin and a specialist in the field of museum business, to take part in the defense of diploma theses in cultural heritage and tourism. She participated in the defense procedure with pleasure and was very much interested in the content and results of papers. As a symbol of cooperation and respect Professor Rude presented EHU library with many books on museum business and protection of cultural heritage in German and English.”



Graduation of EHU students in Frankfurt

The closing of the university was a period of crisis because of politicization of the university which, as a matter of fact, had been imposed on us by the authorities. This way it was easier to legitimize administrative arbitrariness towards students and teachers. The authorities had a ready ideological basis and police technologies pushing out the political opposition. Besides, having a small and ineffective political opposition, they must have needed to create some new internal sources of threat. They were required to justify a total attack on the rights and freedoms of the citizens of Belarus. The inertia of these expectations still generates absolutely inadequate assumptions that EHU in Lithuania is something like a training camp for new “forest brothers”.

Both inside and outside the university there were people saying that in response the university should be transformed into a certain oppositional structure which accepted the challenge of the authorities and threw all its forces to fight against the regime. But then we would have ceased to be the European Humanities University, would have refused to do what we can do best and that can bring reliable results even though it is a longer-term prospect. Our slogan is not “fight against the regime” but “work in favor of the future of Belarus”. Certainly, we see this future differently from the official authorities in Minsk. But we will struggle for this future helping to form a critical mass of professional, civilized, and civilized people in Belarus.

Vladimir Furs, EHU professor: *“Obviously, from the very beginning the EHU project was to a certain extent risky. But all the same the university was opened under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and under the patronage of the Orthodox church. The situation had been changing gradually, but now it changed dramatically because the EHU project – not on our initiative (!) – turned out to be very politicized. I think that it is not very good for our academic programs. The European Humanities University is an academic project, and it should not be confused with the school of a young opposition fighter; we offer educational programs and programs of preparing modern specialists. If the professional work of my colleagues could be called a political activity then it is a policy in the field of the symbolic, a politics of knowledge, and the stakes in the “struggle” here are the criteria of authenticity and topicality of humanitarian knowledge.”*



Students

Grigory Minenkov, dean of the EHU philosophy faculty: *“Social reality is always constructed by us. The basic problems of our country and our society are connected with the fact that masses of people including those who make decisions think using the categories of the middle of the last century. When another, globalized world becomes real with all kinds of borders losing sense and decisions being made as if we were still living in the old industrial society where there is some truth valid for everyone then we get what we have. Absence of humanitarian culture is one of the main reasons for everything that happens in our country.*

After all, what is a humanist? S/he is a critical analyst, a person who can analyze events and processes, explain them and show how to act in a specific situation without offering a certain absolute truth but rather teaching others to think critically. This is what we have been teaching. When such thinking becomes the thinking of masses then, probably, it will be a success. I will once again emphasize that the destruction of the European Humanities University is a humanitarian catastrophe for our country . . .

I believe that it is our persistence and firm determination to preserve the university that became the foundation for its revival. At the moment of crisis everybody saw that we had a Team, a university community united on the basis of principles of academic freedoms. Anatoly Mikhailov's position that was shared by the majority of my colleagues implies that an educational establishment is not a political structure. Moreover, there is a law that educational institutions should keep out of politics. The authorities themselves break the law by creating political structures in educational establishments and making them teach ideology. We followed the law and told the students that their political convictions were their right and their private matter but the university was for studies.

Clearly, a university trying to construct a new system of education is in this or that way involved in big politics oriented towards a really effective development of society. In this sense we, of course, were engaged in political activity, but we refused to do politicking. I do not think it would be correct for us to go to the barricades and engage in political activity at the university.

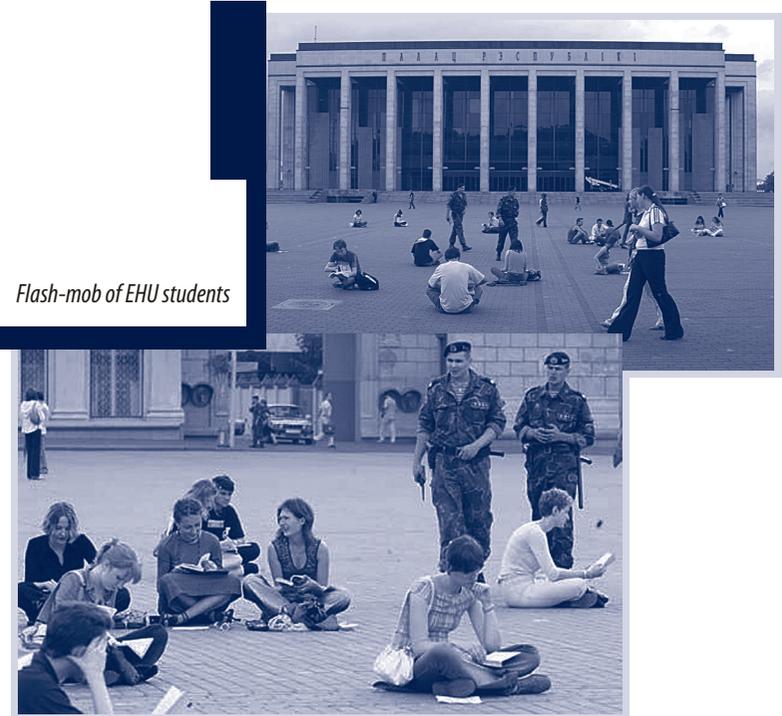
Though . . . maybe at times we should have been more active. Let history make its judgment. In a way we tried to walk “between drops” but it was impossible. The peculiarity of regimes like the one in Belarus today is that, on the one hand, there is no politics as such but on the other hand any movement turns into something political. Moreover, the authorities simply do not know how to react to some of these movements. Flesh-mobs organized by our students as a sign of protest against closing EHU could serve as an appropriate example.

It is interesting that it was impossible to explain everything that had happened to my colleagues in the USA where I spent a few months last year. They were perplexed and asked, “How can the president of the country close a university? How is it possible for our governor to come and close a university?” I said, “That's how. It cannot be explained.” After all, it is really impossible. But it is our reality.

Today's attitude to EHU of the authorities is similar to envy which is experienced by uneducated people looking at someone's successes. “Oh, they are preparing this elite, and what are you? Slaves.” But the elite does not have slaves! A slaveholder has slaves. . . The real elite serves society. The present Belarusian elite serves itself. Napoleon opened national schools in France where they prepared the elite and it was the pride of France. The same happened in many countries. I will allow myself to doubt whether the present power can create anything similar.

What has happened to EHU is a drama. A personal one. At EHU I do what I can do and know how to do. And, of course, the loss of such an opportunity to work forming new educational models, teaching students, be engaged in many other things in rather quiet conditions is a drama. For me, as well as for many of my colleagues the drama is also the inability to return to state educational institutions from a psychological point of view. I cannot breathe that air and speak the words which one is required to say. . . “

Flash-mob of EHU students



The closing of EHU is, of course, a considerable reputational damage to Belarus, and it is also harmful for its academic and simply human potential (the future will show the size of the damage done). But developing Grigory Minenkov's thought, the closing of EHU is also a set of personal dramas the description of which might require a separate book. Here are a few fragments of "the broken mirror".

Alla Sokolova, EHU professor, dean of the law faculty: *"When the process of closing the university began there appeared problems with the confirmation of my doctor's degree. After my defense the Higher Attestation Committee had been delayed its decision for nearly a year. EHU was closed. My degree was not confirmed. I got nowhere twice. The dissertation topic was "Social aspects of law formation". The defense procedure took place at the BSU Dissertation Council, the first reviewer being from the Moscow academic Institute of state and law; everything seemed to have gone well. The dissertation contained no political tendency though the legal analysis and evaluation were made not in the spirit of official ideology. There is another thing interesting in my case. Not just hints were given, I was told point blank that if I went back to the BSU I would now be a doctor of sciences. But by then I had already made my choice. I still feverishly responded to another expert's conclusion concerning my dissertation, to the "black" reviewer, was getting ready for the session of the experts' committee, but I was already thinking more about other things such as how to transfer to other universities the army of our students whose parents were nervous, worried and kept crying. We hold the graduation ceremony; on receiving their diplomas the fifth-year students cried of joy as they managed to do it while the students who just finished their first year cried as they realized that they would probably have no such celebration. Of course there were moments when it was impossible to cope with emotions, anxiety; there were moments when one simply wanted to cry. But we solved the main problem: thanks to the reputation of Mikhailov, part of our students were admitted to universities in the USA and Europe, and the bigger part was transferred to the BSU. My students were transferred to the department of international relations with international law as specialty. They had to pass additional examinations to obtain the necessary credits. It had to be done within a very short period of time and not always in a benevolent atmosphere. But they managed. . . As far as the question of the EHU team is concerned. . . What would I do in that difficult situation without "my own" small team – Inna Sergeevna Shchavlikova, Tatyana Ivanovna Kuznetsova and Tanechka Kazakhevich?! Within just a few days together we prepared private files of students, wrote out academic certificates and took all these documents to the BSU student department. BSU employees carefully checked each "file" and were surprised how we had managed to do everything in such an orderly way with all the appropriate signatures and all the forms filled in so neatly. And when we "handed over" our children, the three of us went out to the BSU public garden and burst into tears. We went to a bar, drank cognac and sobbed not being able to calm down because it was only then that we realized that it was the end. There was no more university, no more students and no more work. It was, perhaps, the most dramatic moment. How could I calm my colleagues? How could I help them to get a new job? What shall I do myself?"*

The most dramatic and unforgettable event is the memory of the final meeting in the university courtyard on August 6, 2004. Students, graduates of the previous years, parents and teachers got together. There was no room to squeeze a cat in. We had been warned not to hold an unauthorized meeting and that there would be grave consequences. But how could we turn down the students' initiative to gather for the last time in the university courtyard, to grieve together and to say goodbye to each other?

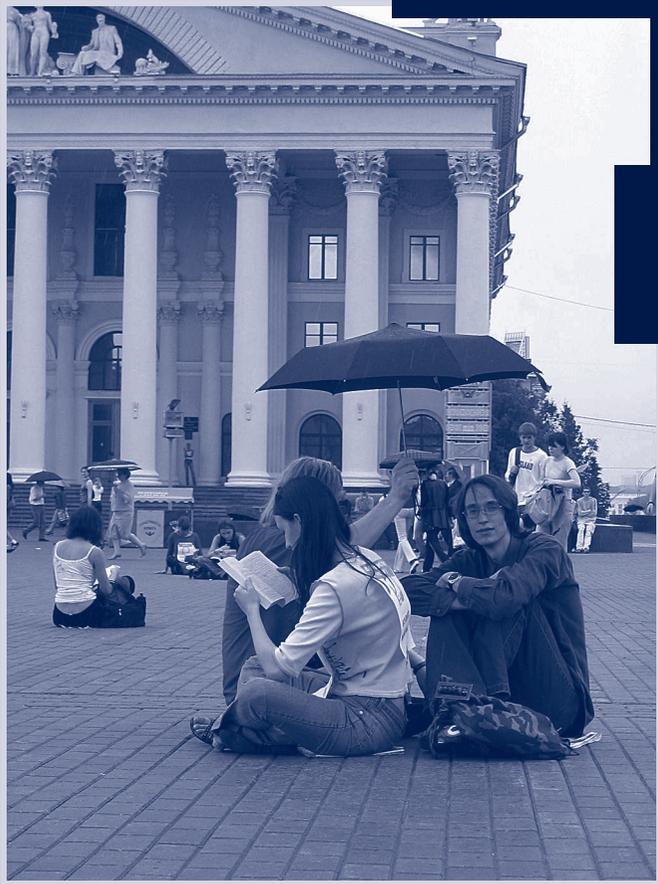


Dénouement



Meeting in support of EHU

EHU vice-rector Tatyana Galko: *"It was the last meeting which the students had in the university courtyard. I was being interviewed and while sobbing I tried to explain something to journalists. Then I came up to the people from "the special services" whom I knew, to our curators, and in anguish rebuked them, «Do you understand WHAT you have done, do you?! You do not understand!" After all, these are also the realities of our time: curators from KGB. They came to me as I was an official person. They came both to Anatoly Arsenievich Mikhailov and to Vladimir Aleksandrovich Dunaev. Most likely, they also communicated with other EHU employees. This was the "best" that we took from the Soviet higher education – the surveillance of students by the secret service. They had to track down what was happening in the youth milieu and to see how the decisions of ideological plenary meetings were carried out. But it is not about them now. . . In the courtyard where we were locked not being allowed to go out into the street, with cordons put round the university, the impression was it was a meeting of extremists that was cordoned off. There were lots of plainclothesmen and men not in civilian clothes. We started singing "Gaudeamus"; and everybody started to sob. . . Then Masha Nesterova, a student of the philosophy department and one of the active members of the student self-management came onto the "podium". I do not remember the whole content of her speech, but I remember the main idea. She said that the main thing that the university had given them would not be taken away either by an army or special riot units clubs. It was already inside the students and in their future children, "We have been taught to be free people. We will carry this feeling of the free person through our whole lives." When you hear such words at "the moment of truth" you understand that you have lived and worked not in vain. It is obvious that this is what we taught them. Not to fight at the barricades but to develop critical thinking, to have respect for people and to make a conscious choice of one's own civic position."*



Flash-mob of EHU students

Dean of the EHU law faculty Alla Sokolova: *“On the eve of the meeting we had calls from KGB and from militia. They warned about possible excesses and tried to dissuade us from holding it. I then suggested to Masha Nesterova, a student of the philosophy department (she was our student leader and a very clever, brave, courageous, beautiful, uncompromising girl) that we meet in the hall. It was scary: what if they suddenly started beating children as they were capable of everything. She firmly answered, «No, we will gather outside.” We took safety measures and surveyed the courtyard, saw if there were any emergency exits if it became necessary to run away. There were no exits. We opened the doors of our building in case they started using force so that it might be possible to hide in it. THEY, let us call them so, THEY came long before the beginning and did the same: they looked whether there were any exits out of the courtyard. Gradually our courtyard began to be filled with people with shaven heads, brawny necks and a fierce look. The yard of the building opposite the university was full of special buses with tinted glass, five or six of them.*

There were touching moments. For example, when Dunaev was saying his farewell word for the first time in my life I saw him to be a little lost and at the same time he was so natural feeling sorry for everybody and everything. There is a video recording of this meeting. No matter how many times you watch it you still get tears in your eyes. THEY were among us. It was so obvious and so unnatural. We are recording and taking pictures, and THEY are recording and taking pictures with two or three cameras recording us from the windows. Just think of it: children, the best in the whole of Belarus with fluent command of several languages, with good knowledge, desire to work, deserving all possible praise and support! And here are THEY watching us, receiving instructions over a walkie-talkie, ready to take action if... You feel like that if you attend a Chernobyl march or find yourself on the square on March 19. Us and Them. The society has split up.

In the days of closing the university in 2004 EHU students initiated a flash-mob. At regular intervals they dissipated on Oktyabrskaya square, which is the central square of the country, and then they all at once sat down, opened different clever books and began to read them thoughtfully. When answering the questions of the confused riot squad militiamen (“What are you doing?”) rushing about among them the students answered in an unperturbed manner that “they were studying as there was no other place to do it...”. Really, is book reading in a public place an illegal act?! “Fine impulses of the soul!” thought the militiamen looking at the students. Having come to their senses, the militiamen began to “smother” them. To keep out of harm's way the young people were pushed away as far as possible from the residence of the president. Well, at least they did not take the books away and did not throw them into the fire...

Maria Nesterova, Alexander Klepatsky, Alexander Filatov, Dmitry Korenko, Sergey Lyubimov, Alisa Syrokvash... one could have named here almost all the students who studied in EHU in 2004. We, EHU teachers, admired the courage, civil maturity, intelligence and ingenuity revealed by our students at that time. It is for all of you that we want to live and work!

Those who closed us and those who still now and again sling dirt at the former and present EHU students in the official press (is it a plan of operational activities?) – just visit the site “Odnoklassniki”, look at the faces of these people and see where they study or work and what they have already achieved in life and admit at least to yourself that they are neither stray sheep nor brainless extremists you associate them with; they are the future of Belarusian society, the future that has already been partially lost ...



Alexander Kolbasko, the dean of EHU faculty of arts: *"I have recently been to Paris where there is already a whole community of graduates of the department of museum studies and tourism. They live a good life, get together and exchange opinions, support one another and their former teachers who come to Paris. We felt that in Berlin, Frankfurt and Warsaw there are groups of "our people" who have successfully found their place in life and are always glad to meet EHU-people."*

Sergey Pankovsky, dean of the EHU French-Belarusian faculty: *"Many EHU graduates now work abroad quite successfully. Some continued their education and have already defended their master and doctor theses. Others work in respectable international organizations and big corporations. Many of our graduates did remarkably in competitions for vacancies sometimes leaving behind hundreds of French people, for example, in France. We have data concerning participation of our graduates in competitions for vacancies in well-known international organizations where they took first places among a few hundred applicants from all over the world. Certainly, I cannot speak for everyone, but those who got diplomas – not only those who graduated from EHU with honors – have been quite successful in life. What a pity that in the majority of cases they had to do it not in our country."*



From the story of one of the event participants, dean of the EHU law faculty Alla Sokolova:

"I asked one of those who were "escorting" us from the square:

– Do you really believe it is fair that you convoy us, teachers and students, like prisoners of war when we have not done anything illegal? What are you doing?

– We are defending our Homeland.

– From us?!"

Students

The authorities used diverse subterfuges and tricks to crush us. The minister's proposal was in fact authoritative interference in the corporate life of the university and legal nonsense. He had no legal right even to speak about the resignation of the rector. In our confrontation we tried to oppose sometimes legally illiterate steps of the authorities by using forcible arguments the way it happened, for example, with the receipt of the license for educational services. But practice has shown that in an authoritarian state it is possible to liquidate an institution without any sufficient legal base. The closing of EHU is not a legal but a political case. Liquidation of one of the best universities in the country is an unprecedented event. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education on the eve of all those events in December, 2003 EHU was second (after the BSU) in the rating and took first place in the research field. Now Belarus will be known in the world also as "the country in which universities get closed" (A. Mikhailov).

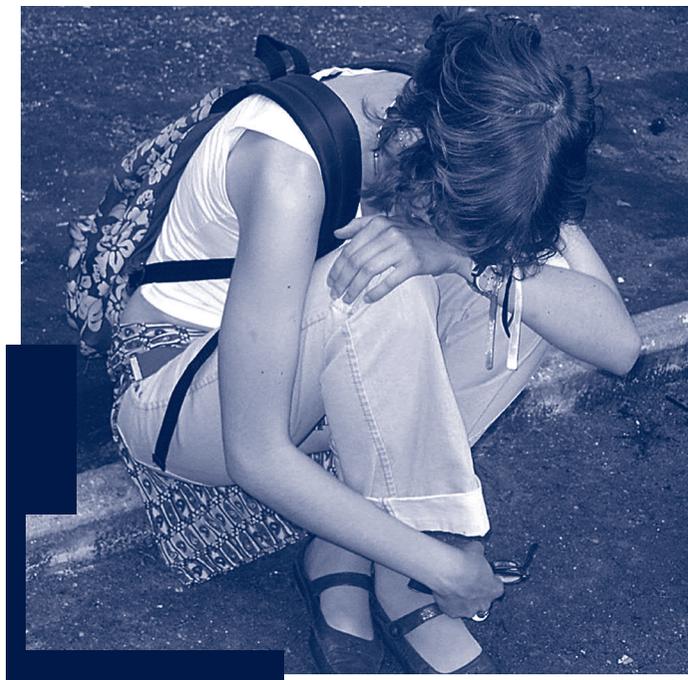
The EHU ship which had been successfully maneuvering, maneuvering in the bay between the reefs of normative documents and the ships of other higher educational institutions which had anchored, and seemed to be close to leaving for free sail, it did not manage to maneuver...

A year later on August 5, 2005 EHU students and teachers gathered on Oktyabskaya square to commemorate EHU in Minsk. Just like a year before, it was a creative and civilized action with lighted candles, without shouts and Brownian motion. The EHU community once again showed an example of a non-violent civilized opposition to the political regime. The reaction of the authorities was immediate and "quite creative", too. We were surrounded by plainclothesmen and were convoyed away from the square. Turning all of it into something like an original flash-mob: a column of university teachers and students with revealing irony dramatized the captivated "internal enemy" who was being taken through the streets of the Hero city.



Dénouement

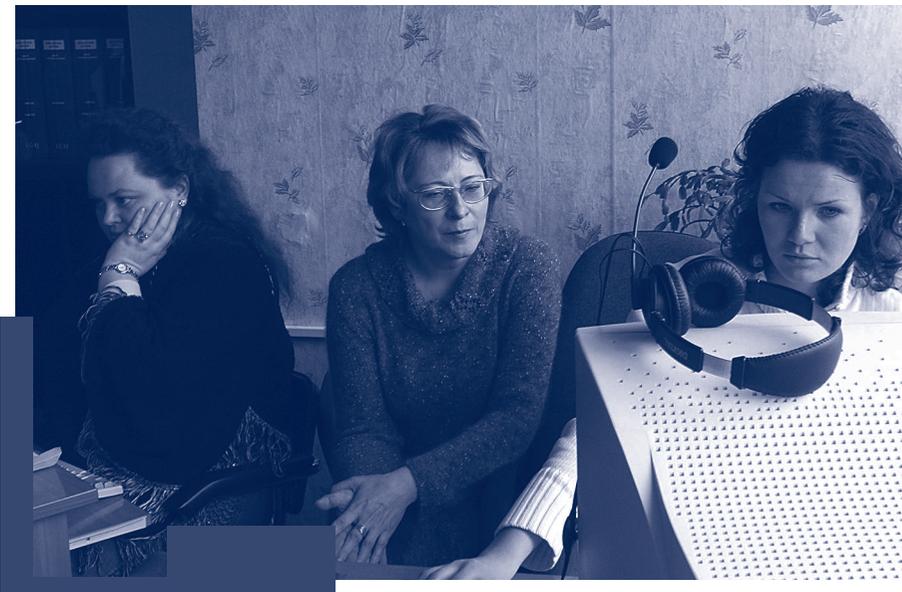
Students



In the shortest terms it became possible to make “an ordinary miracle”, namely, to revive the university in a new format and in a new place sustaining and strengthening the EHU team without losing “our student” thanks to administration creative thinking, unique working capacity and, probably, simply to good luck and the EHU management, first of all to Anatoly Mikhailov and Vladimir Dunaev, Again people believed in us. We had the first enrollment that was difficult and risky for both parties as the beginning of EHU operation in Vilnius was an equation with too many unknown variables. Our former students started to return to us. They were the students who had been graciously admitted by the authorities to the “prestigious” state universities of Belarus. These students brought with them voices from “the other world” of state higher education which we had already forgotten.

Olga Mishina, student of the EHU faculty of arts: *“EHU was a kind of big family even despite the fact that I did not study there but came only once a week from another city to attend the preliminary courses. I come from Brest and I really wanted to study in EHU. I did not manage to find another specialty where it would be so interesting for me. There is an atmosphere of learning everywhere there including the library where students study till late, in the classrooms and even in the corridors. There were very good relations with course teachers. After the closing of EHU we studied in the BSU for a year but we never felt ourselves to be BSU students. We are EHU students. We also had a premonition that EHU would revive and we would go there. Not everybody moved there, of course, but many did.”*

By the way, this letter reminded of a division that was very important for the destiny of EHU – its preparatory department which was the most expensive in the city but which, nevertheless, never lacked students. We never experienced a shortage of those who wanted to study at EHU and knew about it from their eighth and sometimes from the seventh grade and attended our preparatory lessons. But even those who could hardly expect to pass the competition at our university successfully did not mind attending classes here because it was interesting for them to be with our teachers and with our applicants. They felt comfortable in the conditions which were created for our students not only by very interesting teachers, but also by the whole benevolent and amicable team of the department led by deans Elena Ivanovna Novikova who was actually the founder of the division at the university and her successor Pavel Yurievich Kudryashov who was also a talented teacher. Many schoolchildren went to study with specifically “Kudryashov” as well as with “Tsaptsyn”, “Malikova”, “Gvozdeva”, “Dubinskaya” and other remarkable teachers.



N. Grin, A. Sokolova, L. Kushner

Anastasia Matchenko, student of the EHU law faculty: *“I had studied in the BSU for a year, and it was absolutely different. There was a clear differentiation between teachers and students there. If you are a student you cannot ask the teacher questions which “disrupt discipline” or show a critical attitude towards what the teacher is saying. You cannot ask the question: “Why do you think my point of view is wrong?” Or: “Why do you think I am dressed improperly?” Here, at EHU, there are no rigid hierarchical relations between teachers and students. You can communicate with them like with friends. Perhaps it is, of course, caused by the reason that here we are without parents, and they try to substitute parents for us and try to tell us what to do and where to go. Because psychologically it is also difficult when the parents are not around and your access to them is limited. I wanted to study at EHU. Last year I studied in the BSU, now I came back here and again it is my first year of study. The knowledge that people receive here and there is essentially different. There the students study only during the last few days before the examination session and the teacher does not take notice of it: the main requirement is that students strictly recite the text of the lectures while here they welcome your creative potential, unusual approaches, and original ideas. Here it is not enough to read some material; you should understand it and use additional literature as well. Another advantage of studying here is that they all know you in person because when there are two or three hundred people at the university you know practically everyone. For example, the rector knows where everyone comes from, deans remember everyone by name, by surname and know your age. After my first year at the BSU when I came to take away my documents they asked me what department I was from, asked for my surname and searched in the archives. To them I was without personality. Here you constantly feel care, there are regular meetings with the deans, and we have already met with the rector two or three times. Ambassadors from different countries came to EHU and we met with them. Such democracy would not be allowed at the BSU or other higher educational establishments of Belarus.”*



First exhibition of works of designer students at EHU (Vilnius)

The expulsion of the university from Belarus opened a new stage of its evolution: in front of our eyes it is turning from a classical university into a non-classical, network university, into a phenomenon of global society. Within the framework of modern society emphasis in education is shifting towards independent search, selection and analysis of information which acquires a more and more visual character. Therefore, in place of classical humanitarian disciplines with philosophy in the centre a whole new complex of specialties emerges including visual and cultural studies, media and communications, visual design, visual anthropology, visual sociology, etc. Changes in the disciplinary matrix of the university reflect the conditions of the global information market where graduates will have to position themselves. Another essentially new feature is that information and multimedia technologies cease to be an auxiliary technical skill and move to the centre of education even in humanities.

In the early 1990s courses like "Basics of Computer Literacy" were used to solve the problem of doing away with computer illiteracy and of easing the transition of the classical scholar from a typewriter to a computer that was used almost exclusively to type texts. Now modern information technologies and skills of creating a multimedia product in many respects determine the content of training. The ability to find information in the Internet, to compile database, to analyze and interpret quite different kinds of visual images (cinema, photography, TV, computer graphics, advertising, etc.), to present one's knowledge in a multimedia form becomes one of the basic skills necessary for one's successful advancement on the labor market.

Before the Web epoch reading and oral or written compilations of different kinds of literature was the major task of the student. Today the perception of the student "is reformatted" by postmodernist mass media. A stream of quickly changing, controlled visual information with total practices of TV-zapping and Internet surfing is the area in which not so much the consciousness but perceptive predispositions of young people are formed. One can find advantages and disadvantages in it but one also has to take these realities into account.

Research in American universities has shown that the volume of what students write during the semester in their e-mail, forums and chats is approximately 10 times bigger than their written examinations. "Paper carriers" make up about 10 % of the literature read and oral lectures without illustrations or multimedia presentations remain more than by half on the periphery of student attention as students begin to look through various network resources. Intrusion of postmodernist visual culture into the space of education frequently overturns traditional relations of things in the classroom. So, for example, if the teacher uses a fragment from a fresh blockbuster as an illustration of a theoretical concept, then for students this concept itself can carry out an illustrative function for better understanding of the visual text that is more topical for them.

The "technical", at first sight, fact that the majority of students in the classroom (at least, in today's EHU) sit with the laptops connected to the wireless Internet essentially changes the situation. They do not need to have the dates of life of a certain author written on the board, there is no need to cite biographic data for them as they find it in the network encyclopedia while you are pronouncing the person's name. They move around and inside the text under study with a fantastic speed having all texts before their eyes in the electronic form in which possibilities of structuring and information search are 10 times faster than for printed versions. There is no need to retell them anything as all the texts are accessible for independent reading and can be accessed just by pressing a couple of buttons.

Actually, the student does not sit at the lecture with its linear unfolding of speech but in a certain virtual environment, a hypertext with several open "windows": various texts that have something to do with the discussion, illustrative materials, a live "picture" with the teacher, e-mail messages from friends, and simply interesting network resources. The student simply continues the practice of switching media channels and opening virtual "windows" to which the student had got used to from childhood. Different disciplinary actions are ineffective in this case. Knowledge "formatted" for this new sensitivity is needed; the essential part of this knowledge is algorithms of search, selection, systematization and visual presentation of the material. In a network university a classical lecture is not simply supplemented with a display of some pictures to keep the attention of young people of "postprint" culture but acquires a distinct tendency of being transformed into a multimedia presentation, a small film. The same can be said about various tests and final papers of students.

In today's EHU both the teacher and the student move more and more from philological compilations to the visual montage of lectures and final papers. The art of film direction, sound design, multimedia technologies gradually become a part of the teaching methodology where it becomes necessary to calculate the tempo of picture display, to consider peculiarities of their montage, specificity of text comments and "voice over", new rhythms of speech segmentation, etc.

Lecture becomes a part of the student's network or media experience; otherwise it turns into a background, kind of "wall-paper" for other pictures and texts. More and more EHU teachers today have their personal experience of creating virtual art projects, film and television production that go along with their pedagogical and scientific interests. These authorial works become an organic part of lectures; there is a specific re-export of theoretical material from the space of mass media back to the student audience that opens up new resources of education efficiency (then, for example, practically all the "windows" of the information opened at the lecture deal with the material under study mutually complementing each other).

All of this describes network changes in the university on a microeducational level, transformations of its "matter", the experience of space and time. But EHU is also becoming a network university in a more traditional sense of the word, developing forms of distance learning and education by correspondence. In 2004–2005 when EHU was deprived of its license to carry out educational activities in Minsk and resident instruction started in Vilnius, distance learning was a severe necessity for EHU teachers compelled to survive in the conditions of resident forms of education being closed.

Dean of the EHU philosophy department, Grigory Minenkov: *The Vilnius period began for EHU with the public organization "EHU-International" which started the so-called "informal training" announcing the opening of distance learning courses and becoming their provider. These courses were aimed at the new curriculum meeting the requirements for the provision of a bachelor degree characteristic of the European universities going through reform in compliance with the Bologna process. Teachers prepared different kinds of materials, sent them out to their students in accordance with a certain schedule and in compliance with detailed syllabi; students sent their written papers in an electronic format. After the registration of EHU as a Lithuanian university trainees of informal training courses turned into students of the new EHU and the credits and grades received by them were recognized. However, the distance forms of the education process mastered by both parties did not disappear; instead they started to be implanted more and more into the educational process for full-time students and served as the basis for a new modern variant of education by correspondence.*

It provided minimum earnings and communication with former and potential students. EHU teachers had to reorient themselves literally on the go as they scanned texts and pictures, mastered various virtual covers for distance learning (E-learn, Moodle), placed materials in them, developed new architectonics of electronic courses. They also had to learn various forms of network communication with students, etc. They discovered their remarkable abilities to study becoming, in fact "the first students" of the network university. Then, in the process of restoration of day forms of education in Vilnius the skills that they received while teaching "distance courses" were organically integrated into the work with full-time students making the return to the classical university unnecessary and impossible. Now a considerable part of the majority of day courses exists in the net including texts, visual and methodological materials, tasks for self-study, "files" for gathering examination papers, etc. Teachers' authorial courses have a tendency to obtain their completed form as texts of lectures, books or multimedia disks that get published in the net not sinking like dead weight of sketches and manuscripts onto the teachers' desks.



First exhibition of works of designer students at EHU (Vilnius)



Students at the lecture (Vilnius)

The latest tendency in the 21st century education is a regular digital archiving and media formatting of the educational process. It presupposes two notions vital for the understanding of the network prospects of higher education. First, merging of real and virtual educational spaces meaning the transformation of a lecture course into a multimedia product or an educational film which can be stored in database and spread out through channels of mass communications (from the Internet to educational TV-programs). Secondly, lecture is dying out as a routine revision of some material in the closed (and dependent) audience of students and turns into a unique educational event which becomes visible in the public sphere. The university, thus, ceases being a place for the reproduction of knowledge distanced from life and is transformed into an important component of the public sphere, into an institution of cultural policy, a critical instance in the field of mass media.

Within the given tendency as forms of creative practice, and later, probably, of their usual practice students will pass from taking down the teacher's monologue to video shooting and editing a film on the basis of the lecture to produce an original scenario. Thus, in the act of learning the student acquires new knowledge and skills required during the epoch of multimedia and digital technologies.

On the other hand, the doors of the educational classroom swing open and the teacher starts to address the academic community as a whole. This will considerably reduce possibilities for non-professionalism and imitation of pedagogical efforts. Just like amateur films in Youtube become an effective means of spontaneous struggle of students in many post-Soviet universities with drunk or inadequate teachers, digital archiving of educational events (staged by the teacher and not under the eye of the Big Brother) will allow to struggle with the lecturer as a monopolist in his segment of the schedule (the student can always compare his lecture on the given topic with the lecture given by another teacher). Some teachers are extremely reluctant to let other teachers be present at their lectures. Maybe once every five years when they have to give the so-called "open lecture" to be selected for another term preparing specially for it. And no public discussion and openness the rest of the time. One more problem of attending lectures of colleagues which still cannot become a system is that teachers do not have the time and possibilities to attend their colleagues' lectures as their schedules overlap. It is a different story if lectures in a video format are constantly accessible on the net; it means that they are open to students of other specialties, for colleagues and experts from other countries at any convenient time. It is a powerful stimulus to improve the quality of teaching.

Because of this mode of new publicity, in particular, it will not be necessary to prove the educational level in various universities through journalists and bureaucrats. When there exists a constantly operating, informal (forums, live journals, responses and remarks in virtual scientific journals, etc.) cross network examination of educational events carried out by colleagues operating in your field worldwide, the acuteness of the problem with the so-called "external experts" from bureaucratic structures is diminished. At times they simply show miracles of misunderstanding of what happens in unique educational programs as they are absolutely external to their theoretical field and dynamics of development (evaluating them like a gipsy evaluating an expensive Swiss watch: not according to the complexity of the mechanism but by the weight of the precious metal used).

Here is one of the last examples of sincere interest of EHU in cooperation with colleagues from other Belarusian universities and creation of various expert communities. The interest encounters anonymous bureaucratic resistance:

[HTTP://FIERY-GARRICK.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/51338.HTML](http://FIERY-GARRICK.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/51338.HTML)
4/12/08

"Next week the journalism department of the good old BSU (if I got it right) will host an amusing forum with a progressive name "PaPRats kvetka". The main activity of this event will be concentrated on the presentation by teams from universities from different countries of their educational establishments as well as on the solution of complicated tasks prepared for the teams by forum organizers with the help of progressive PR-technologies. It promises to be quite entertaining.

It so happened that an official invitation for EHU to have its team at the forum was issued as well. We were frankly surprised by this goodwill gesture of the main university of the country, got enthusiastic about this opportunity and began preparing a team for participation in this amusing event. It was necessary to gather a team, study the subject of the forum, prepare a presentation and then find somewhere the money to pay for the tickets to Minsk... We spent about two weeks doing all of this. I participated in the preparation as well and got emotionally involved in the project as a very dear one. And today we received a letter from the organizers saying "Sorry, guys, after consulting with our forum partners we decided to deny your registration..." That was it... It is a pity...

The university acquires a network character also through raising international cooperation to a new level. EHU became a part of a really international community. Colleagues from Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, France, Great Britain, Sweden, Finland, the USA and other countries give lectures at the university. Especially close collaboration is being developed in the Eastern European region. The university is becoming more confident moving in the fairway of the Bologna process; it is becoming a part of the European university network. Student and teacher exchanges are being intensified and academic mobility is becoming a way of life. Not only visiting lecturers come to the university; now it partially hosts foreign programs and projects. The system of joint standards and mutual credits with European universities is being expanded. EHU students receive a Lithuanian state diploma recognized in the countries of the European Union. EHU bachelor students can easily expand their knowledge in Master and PhD programs abroad if they have the appropriate command of foreign languages and proper level of theoretical education.

Higher education today is being brought in conformity with the level of globalization and informatization of economics: it is an industry, an industry of knowledge with all the consequences. Education is becoming more internationalized, networking and flexible. One may say a lot about the benefits of the Soviet model of higher education and about the fact that the world is rapidly moving forward by itself while Belarus with its own ideology is going its own way. However, the matter is not so much pro-Western or pro-Eastern orientation or the struggle between ideologies; it is more about global trends and competitiveness of knowledge. The world is changing radically including the formats, the speed of circulation and methods of information use, the swiftness and autonomy of decision making.

This world does not have any special “Belarusian ideology” or unique “Belarusian model” of social-economic development (Scandinavian countries serve as much better examples of socially oriented states against the background of dynamic highly technological economy). Something works better; other things do not go as well in this world. Different justifications of the fact that we do many things worse than others are Belarusian ideology. Today the stumbling block is not the administrative genius of the Boss and the ability of his inferiors in their work places to strictly follow the instructions; rather it is the forming of a creative class or a kind of peaceful social revolution when instead of the “mass” of workers and clerks there emerges a great number of people who make decisions independently. This is like playing on the stock exchange: if you do not use the unique state of the market at the current moment and go to consult your boss you will lose your chance. Global information world needs a lot of people who are able to see at least medium-term prospects and relatively freely plan their activities in the framework of flexible production teams.

There is a story about the famous Russian physicist Pyotr Kapitsa that is most instructive for our times. When he went to England for retraining under the supervision of Ernest Rutherford who by that time had become a science classic, the latter immediately gave him a problem to solve, specifically, to make certain calculations of physical processes. Having done complicated calculations before the set time young Kapitsa ran to the guru and happily inquired, “What am I to do next?” The answer was, “You are excluded from my laboratory.” In spite of the grave tone this did not have any serious consequences for young Kapitsa. As his colleagues later explained to him, Rutherford let the beginning scholar understand the following: when fulfilling the first task a real scientist must understand what part of the scientific project he is, define his place in this process and set further tasks himself.



Students (Vilnius)



Students at the lecture (Vilnius)

The moral of the story is as follows: the system of professional relations which today is becoming a common economic phenomenon has been growing organically inside science. Science turns out to be a model of future economy and future society. Thus, the university not only reproduces the cultural tradition and brings about the growth of new knowledge. Social forms themselves within which this knowledge will function are crystallized.

Instead of closed hierarchical structures modern information economy needs wide mobile nets of professionals. The main quality of these nets is the ability to configure new teams of people every time and concentrate resources for specific objectives. Taking into account that in the postindustrial world almost every emerging task, even a production one, is unique and does not have any analogues requiring its own constellation and specialists, availability of professional networks is not a luxury but “a transportation means”. Modern companies, especially in the creative fields of design, public relations and educational services, are only nodes at the crossroads of different professional chains. A great part of work is done by specialists who are invited on a temporary basis to fulfill this or that particular task. On the other hand, many specialists work part-time in other companies. Advertising as nearly the most important postmodernist profession can serve as an example.



One order, promotion of one product requires an artist who works in a certain style while another order needs a fashionable clip maker and still another needs a speech writer who is able to generate the key slogan. Thus, there is a need for people who can work in a team, catch the ideas of the leading specialists right away and are able to turn them into a final product in the shortest time span possible (deadline means no excuse).

For the provincial eye of domestic ideology it may seem a strange and discomforting vision, a sheer “yard with a through passage”, an avenue filled with constant city mobility. The provincial eye is used to its pieces of land surrounded by a fence where the owner is the master and where “strangers do not wander about”. It is also used to the stability of repetition of the same actions and words.

This is the fundamental trick of the Belarusian ideology that is anti-urban in its essence – substituting the value of freedom for the value of stability with a silent mix of political and economic stability, macroeconomic stability and well-being of a separate ordinary person. None of the normal people who make up the majority in Belarus wants political perturbations and internecine wars. However, in modern economy opportunistic perturbations and technological changes, competition and bankruptcy and breakthroughs connected with them are all parts of a normal mode of operation. Making the city dweller get accustomed to stability in general the current authorities in Belarus weaken the general competitiveness of the country in a long-term perspective.

Here we speak not so much about notions of culture and thinking that are too abstract for “real politicians” and “ordinary people”. Let them be happy with an endless TV PR-pop show being “the culture” and monotonous repetition of simple ideological spells serving as “thinking”. However, nobody including the president and “ordinary people” wants to experience any economic backwardness. Today the level of education and science; become a real economic factor, not just in the narrow sense the way it is understood by state officials: natural sciences must serve applied sciences, applied sciences must serve the production and concrete inventions must bring concrete economic profit.

Department is a position of speech protected by external factors of scientific activity itself. First of all, the podium is high above turning the teacher into a talking head, a bust, making him something like a living classic securely protecting "the material corporal bottom". It also includes an austere suit (a modern professor's "gown"), institutional authority, knowledge, positions and other attributes of power worn by the teacher. The set and content of courses offered by the department is a sacral thing blessed by the highest bureaucratic organizations that does not go through any serious changes for many years. The teacher does not have any choice, to say nothing of the student.

Here we speak about the fundamental economic importance of humanities which can and must produce a significant influence on the formation of a new informational society. Society must become a self-organizing system. It is not just a question of civil liberties but rather a matter of economic efficiency and survival. The main "capital" on this way is the humanitarian potential of the country, namely, its people and not political institutions or the material infrastructure.

Accordingly, the elite of such society and the motive power of social-economic development will be not conscientious performers (with no intention to downplay their importance) but educated and creative people who are able to independently join individual projects and programs as well as to generate them themselves.

Network community is a community of equal dialogue, cooperation and free circulation of expert evaluations. In this community new figures of moderators and coordinators come forward replacing the classical figure of the boss. This is an alternative "architectonics" of social organization and communicative processes. It is possible to say that the outdated bureaucratic-hierarchical system of Belarus could not read the EHU format (as a DVD-disc cannot be read through the floppy disc drive) to say nothing about understanding the information saved on it. Hence, on the one hand, there are unintelligible ideas about the subversive anti-Belarusian character of the university while on the other hand, there are "concrete" accusations of the lack of sports equipment during the closing of the university.

Network University already prepares not just highly specialized individuals but creative teams, communities that are multifunctional, flexible and possess such characteristics as lack of rigid hierarchy and professional autonomy. One of the examples of such a community that is being formed at EHU is the program of visual and cultural studies (including bachelor's specialties "Visual Culture", master's program "Visual and Cultural Studies", "Gender Studies" and a number of long-term research projects and media practices). Even the change of terminology is significant as structural units are now called "specialties" and "programs" instead of departments/faculties.

In a classical university a department is the main "cell" of the scientific pedagogical community. Even the word "department" (chair/cathedral) itself refers to pronouncing some truths in the form of monologue by a person who is officially recognized to be a bearer of this truth from a special place high above the silent audience of adherents.



Students at the lecture (Vilnius)

"Specialty" or "program" at EHU is a mobile set of courses and a mobile team of teachers. The teacher here is not the "letter" but rather the "spirit" of knowledge, the word not clad in the armor of power. For example, a partner in net communication in distance learning or a visitor from another university who does not have the power resource (a staff associate professor of the department to whom the student is assigned, a person who will so many times decide the student's destiny in other courses and in different commissions) and who does not have "the armor" of the department becoming a student's live interlocutor. As far as teachers are concerned, the student probably won't even know their formal regalia (and even their appearance differs greatly from the type of the Soviet professor) but will judge according to their deeds but not because of the thesis written some time ago or the scientific degree but by the latest theoretical articles, topical art and media projects and authorial courses. Names but not formal labels are of the greatest importance here.

As it were, net features of the EHU programs look as follows. The EHU education program for visual and cultural studies employs 10 full-time staff members. The professional “net” of visual and cultural studies includes 100 people with a versatile geography (Vilnius, Warsaw, Kharkiv, Moscow, Samara, Bochum, Paris, Rochester, New York, etc.) Every year gives rise to a unique educational project depending on the participating team (though “key players” are permanently involved). The schedule is flexible leaving room for selective courses and depends on the inclusion of the different members of this community in other projects.

Though to tell the truth, the other side of the medal is that dean assistants and coordinators responsible for the current educational process become real “astronauts” of the space of open education. It means that regularly, especially at the beginning of semesters, they have to live through cosmic overloads when during one night they have to put together a schedule for at least one week ahead taking into account hundreds of variables (the time when the teachers are busy, the time of individual consultations with students and availability of multimedia in the classroom for specific classes) and find accommodation for teachers and students. They can exist in the conditions of constant classroom vacuum for a long time. They have steel nerves and unbelievable psychological compatibility when dealing with absolutely different characters and when solving the most unpredictable problems brought to them by students and teachers. At the same time all these ladies manage to remain extremely stylish and urbane. The student-professor brotherhood would have got completely lost in the nets it had woven itself without Galina Gavriyuk, Elena Kovsh, Svetlana Nazarenko, Natalia Popesku, Elena Chernik and many others. A great contribution to the organization of our net existence is made by the EHU IT-specialist Alexey Kaskevich who has no time to sleep at night. Sometimes several times a day he has to change our settings even though he can be in a bad mood, but in general he prefers an orderly and beautiful life.

Structural reconstruction of the classical university is taking place inside the new EHU. Instead of traditional faculties of philosophy, psychology, economics, art, theology now a new matrix of directions (specialties) is being formed reflecting the latest tendencies in humanitarian knowledge such as practical philosophy, media and communications, visual culture, theory and practice of modern art, design, historical anthropology, etc.

Education in the net EHU is based not only on the predominance of seminars over lectures but also on the systematic introduction into the educational process of even more democratic and creative forms of education such as round tables, master classes, creative workshops, laboratories and ateliers (of script writers, photography, film making, modern art, etc.). Thus, the principles of interactivity and free positioning by the students in the educational space are strengthened.

The student can attend a separate special course or master class introducing the student to the selected theme or developing an important skill. The student can take an additional specialty (a minor) in a related program (for example, students of cultural studies specialties can acquire the knowledge of a journalist or a designer). The student actively participates in the formation of his/her schedule from the very beginning dropping the habit of being fitted into the prescribed limits.

EHU remains a unique phenomenon in the field of preparing specialists in humanities as far as the ratio of teachers and students is concerned. At times there were up to 10 or 8 students per one teacher. EHU manages to retain this ratio even now in spite of a whole complex of problems connected with the financing of the university in new conditions (which requires the ratio of at least 1 to 20). This guaranties that dialogical nature, personal identity, activity, variability, in one word, the humaneness of education which by definition is presupposed by humanitarian knowledge.

When solving educational tasks various forms of interdepartmental interaction are encouraged including the formation of student teams for specific tasks (the production of a multimedia project or defense of a course paper) when students of philosophy, cultural studies, journalism, design, and other specialties could interact with each other outside rigid specialization according to the principle of mutual replacement and mutual learning. EHU students are included into research and creative projects becoming a part of professional net communities already in the process of education.



T. Baranova, T. Kuzina, E. Chernik (Minsk)

The university constantly holds various art events. The guru of national photography Valery Lobko encouraged the development of photography. Students of design constantly organize exhibitions. The university student drama school produced the big theatrical performance of the play "In-Between" representing in a tragicomic key the life of the EHU student's community taking place in the space "between" Belarus and Lithuania. This year the work of the EHU student film society moved to a new level when the festival of youth video "Pre-view" was organized immediately indicating big international prospects.

In EHU improvement of the theoretical level and elaboration of new techniques of education and constant interaction of theory and practice (in the sphere of art, media and research) are made on a systematic basis. Since 2003 EHU has begun participation in the network of regional seminars of the Open Society Institute (Budapest) to improve the quality of teaching within the framework of the long-term Program of support of higher education (HESP). Three EHU projects were supported in the area of philosophy, cultural and visual studies and political science (Border Studies) – a unique case for the whole post-Soviet territory. During the period of 3–5 years our young teachers have a possibility to regularly meet in EHU their colleagues from Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic states, countries of Central Asia and Transcaucasia and to discuss theoretical and methodological problems of education in humanities. It becomes possible to invite world-renowned experts in their respective areas of knowledge, to visit various universities on the post-Soviet territory restoring the broken academic connections, to order the latest scientific literature and to master multimedia technologies in teaching. The results of this unprecedented project are already obvious today as young EHU teachers possess the latest knowledge and various methodological skills; they know very well the new generation of colleagues in their disciplines, they constantly exchange experience and organize joint projects.

However, the main emphasis in the HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching project has been made on combining scientific research and teaching into one educational complex.

The huge gap between teaching and scientific research has been much spoken and written about on the whole post-Soviet area. It will be no exaggeration to say that in Belarusian state universities research in the sphere of humanities is almost non-existent. There is, for example, a whole layer of teachers giving the same courses for more than ten years, and every year they come to students with the same abstracts written "by hand" which have already turned yellow with time and for years they account for their scientific work with the same article, etc. From the very beginning such simulation of research was impossible in EHU as from the start only people who were interested in discovering something new instead of reproducing statements from textbooks came to EHU. The HESP program became a powerful mobilizing factor which moved the problem of interaction between scientific research and pedagogical activity to a qualitatively new level. Now the improvement of education quality through constant scientific work of the teacher and presentation of its results in the classroom is becoming the institutional policy of EHU.



At the lecture (Vilnius)

Today the student does not need to be retold the textbook content for him to take it down: the student is capable of reading or finding interesting information on the Internet himself. The student comes to the teacher for authorial knowledge that cannot be found anywhere else, for learning the methodology of increasing knowledge, techniques and culture of humanitarian search. To teach the student something means not to give the student a sum of ready-made definitions but to supply the student with the method and to show how this method can be applied. A Russian philosopher Pavel Florensky defined the essence of a humanitarian lecture as getting new knowledge directly in front of the students as a vivid example of thinking.



At the lecture (Vilnius)

The creative university of the 21st century tends to become a university of names instead of disciplines, just like in educational establishments of arts, for example, in the All-Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) where emphasis is made not on anonymous theoretical courses but on the teacher's personal skill. The student studies not so much film directing, drama or acting skills in general but rather the Master's integral, realized creative world when S. Eisenstein, S. Gerasimov or M. Romm recruit students whom they teach "everything" that they have learnt and they themselves have achieved. Of importance is not what you studied but who taught you. The Soviet university proceeded from the implicit assumption that the discipline speaks for itself (especially when it is "the all-conquering" and "the only true" teaching). Today under this inertia it is too often believed that if you introduce a topical course or the newest discipline into the curriculum the quality of knowledge is guaranteed, and the teacher only has to transmit ultrafashionable terms without distortion. More and more frequently this conceals complete distortion of the educational process and the dense fog of misunderstanding that envelops the teacher and the students. For if you have done nothing yourself and have not said your own word how can you teach others? Personal experience through which any theories are filtered is most important in humanitarian knowledge. A humanitarian course with the same name offered by two different teachers means two different courses for the most important thing here is the means by which principles and patterns are given shape in individual statements. On the deepest level a humanitarian lecture is similar to a psychoanalysis session. After all, the psychoanalyst possessing certain theoretical knowledge (there exists primary castration anxiety which generates various protective mechanisms of the psyche, etc.) does not throw such knowledge on the patient for him "to acquire" it. He asks the patient questions and cultivates the poetics of inquiry so that the patient could ask himself the main question.

The psychoanalyst interprets "texts" of the answers (stories about dreams, children's memories, neurotic symptoms) not to show the patient what his life "actually" means but for the patient to continue the interpretation, understand its algorithms so that the patient's illness might speak itself out in the form of the story of life being told. In other words, the criterion of the quality of humanitarian knowledge is not to repeat what has already been said but to continue the speech from the point where it broke off. If one is to consider ignorance to be an illness then the student of humanities finds himself in the position of a "patient" who consciously starts a dialogue with the teacher. In other words, in psychoanalysis the most essential thing is to apply theory to each individual case and with its help to "produce a spark" of deeply personal words. The psychoanalyst gets appreciated not for his abstract knowledge but, first of all, for his techniques (the ability to constantly develop theory with reference to new cases). The majority of teachers still believe that if the student repeats after them a set of definitions and formulas (which they themselves repeated after someone else) the student's life will change for the better. The contours of a network creative university revealing themselves in today's EHU are a way of giving up this illusion.

On the contrary, constant discussion of the research with an interested audience and attempts to make it clear to different audiences promote the deepening and productivity, not to say "objectivity", of humanitarian knowledge itself that is intersubjective by its very nature so far as it deals with words. After all, there is no "objective" meaning of the word. The word meaning and humanitarian "truth" arise in a dialogue and in the tension of two and more systems of interpretation.

Constant interaction of science and teaching is the basic postulate of the EHU philosophy of education today. It is supplemented with the principle of unity of theory, analytics and creativity in the educational process. For example, film studies are arranged in an original cycle in which courses on film history and theory interlock with courses on film analysis and visual text interpretation and they, in their turn are combined, with master classes and practical workshops on film direction, camera work, script writing and videotape editing. Thus, theoretical knowledge of film gives a key to the method of analyzing concrete films which leads to a person's own creative synthesis and ability to make films thus leading to new theoretical generalizations within one's own cinematographic experience, to the enrichment of the method, etc. Constant reproduction of this cycle is what could be called modern knowledge. EHU is becoming a network project not only in the sense of educational programs. EHU graduates and teachers develop cultural-educational, analytical and creative projects in the virtual space "around" EHU. These projects maintain various links (human, conceptual) with the EHU community and transmit humanitarian knowledge and culture of thinking to the wide environment of civil society. For example, EHU associate professor Olga Shparaga and Alexander Adamyants created a site of the intellectual community of Belarus and the site "New Europe" where they cultivate the spirit of free rational discussions about the condition of Belarusian society and culture.

Olga Shparaga, associate professor of EHU: *"In Minsk there was an illusion in EHU that we live in a European country and we work at a European university with all its problems and drawbacks but, I would say, with a refined academic environment in comparison with other Belarusian educational institutions. For example, in EHU the teacher's load was distributed in such a manner that it was possible to devote a considerable part of time to carrying out various kinds of research. Western professors came to teach, students went abroad on different exchange programs. In general, it was a small European islet. After EHU was closed by the authorities of Belarus we had to face Belarusian reality, and it turned out to be very difficult. Hence, together with EHU-people we decided to create a site of the intellectual community of Belarus which was called upon to promote communication in the intellectual environment. We realized that it was necessary to form a wider social context for discussion and advancement of European values. It turned out that the most productive and original authors who were capable of constant communication with others were EHU graduates, though the audience is much wider and more versatile than our university community."*



O. Shparaga



Our university is becoming an open area for public discussions and is beginning to fulfill the function of the public sphere: to be a place of intersection of various intellectual and artistic circles which in Belarusian reality rotate on different orbits having practically nothing in common. Representatives of different intellectual circles, contemporary painting and literature and well-known journalists meet and discuss pressing issues, develop relationships and organize analytical projects. In EHU there is an effective public sphere; within its framework the work of the administration is critically discussed and suggestions to improve university life are developed. Forms of student self-management are developing, and a student newspaper is issued at the university. Different meetings and round tables of students and teachers initiated "from below" take place on a regular basis where the most topical and acute problems of intra-university life are discussed. A modern university faces a variety of challenges connected with rigid market realities, competition, unstable financing, new demands of society and a corresponding reconfiguration of the whole disciplinary field of humanities. The reviving EHU has to deal with the double pressure of these external circumstances aggravated by the constant administrative pressure which is spread over our academic community in Belarus. EHU students and teachers experience a number of problems because of it. Nevertheless, we have fewer and fewer illusions that all these problems will be solved for us by the bosses. Within the framework of the free and responsible academic community we try to discuss our problems openly and to participate in their solution.

The latest example: in the spring of 2008 the discussion of the student community of the limits of criticism of EHU by members of its community in the space of "Live Blog" ("Zhivoj zhurnal") became extremely heated. The problem of corporate ethics is, generally, ambiguous and contains a lot of hidden pitfalls, especially in our situation when, on the one hand, it is necessary to weigh carefully each word said publicly considering the context of the new EHU existence while, on the other hand, we must prove our adherence to the principles of free speech and university autonomy. Nevertheless, in May 2008 interested students and teachers got together for a round table discussion to discuss the ways which should be used so as to turn sometimes too emotional statements in the net into consistent and useful criticism. Certainly, we cannot solve all problems at once. But at least we are moving ahead in our developing the format of the democratic approach to solving our various difficulties.

It became difficult to localize EHU in physical space and this is another advantage of a network university prompted by our bitter experience. Now it cannot be “closed” as it happened in Minsk. EHU is not walls and doorplates on the offices; it is a number of people united by multilevel formal and informal relations, every one of them being professional and independent.

Jonathan Fanton, president of the MacArthur foundation: *“I love the European Humanities University very much. I have a special liking to this institution because I was president of the New School for Social research in New York which, as a matter of fact, was also a university in exile. I would never have thought that I would again participate in the life of another university in exile at the beginning of the 21st century. I believe that in Germany, probably like in no other country, people understand only too well what a “university in exile” means.*

Despite all the events which have occurred and become the reason for the university's existence in exile, the European Humanities University provides students with fine high-quality education and possesses a fine teaching staff. After all, what is a university? It is teachers and students. This specific university has strong teachers and strong students. Here many students say that the quality of education in EHU is much higher than in other universities. So the first step now is to ensure the survival of European Humanities University. The following step will be to help it return to free Belarus.

In any country there should be state and non-state universities. It is very important in a country with the authoritarian past. European Humanities University has been exposing Belarus to the world and keeps doing it. I see that graduates and teachers of this university can do a lot for the future of Belarus. EHU initiates and supports a fair public dialogue about the main questions and problems of Belarus. I would even say the following: if EHU prospers then Belarus will prosper, too. Should EHU fail it will be not so good for Belarus either.

The government of Belarus closed the university, took away the university's building and, besides, victimized teachers and the administration. A strong state is not afraid of the freedom of thought. Only a very weak and diffident state is afraid of a free exchange of ideas and university freedoms. Therefore, I consider the closing of EHU to be a sign of weakness and insecurity of the present regime. Now it is crucial to document the current period of EHU history. By the way, I am a historian. And I think that it is a little too early to write the history of EHU, but it is very important to collect the information, history and documents in order to write the real history in a few years.”

EHU corporate culture was considerably enriched upon the arrival of our Lithuanian colleagues including the main financier of the university Gedeminas Kapočius, our very first and close assistants Alina Juškiene and Juste Tolvajsaite, economic manager Dejnus Petkevičius to whom hundreds of persons are obliged for their comfortable life in Vilnius, virtuosos of co-ordination of the educational process Skajste Miškinite (in general, we consider her to be one of us since the “prehistoric” times in the 1980s when we studied together at the BSU philosophy faculty in Minsk) and Nelli Statine as well as the kind fairy of the accounts department Marite Zakarauskiene and Irena Vajsvilaite who has quite recently decided to share with all of us the sudden changes of “our exuberant turmoil, ready for fighting” and who was the head of the group of advisers to President Adamkus and many others. Their professional and human qualities, the European spirit and our common historical tradition became the major condition for the revival of the university and entering into the context of life of Lithuania.

We constantly feel diverse support of Europe and the world community. Various structures of the European Parliament and the Council of Northern countries and the government of Lithuania became the guarantors of our existence in exile. The university is regularly visited by European politicians of the highest level (President of Lithuania Valdis Adamkus, Prime Minister of Hungary Ferenc Gyurczány, etc.), representatives of European and American diplomacy and private funds, heads and professors of various Western universities. Their moral, intellectual and material assistance to the university is invaluable. We regard the attitude of the European and world community to us as recognition of what we have already done and as a major stimulus for further fulfilment of the mission of our university to include Belarus into the context of Western civilization.

A democratic collegiate system of management and the Board of trustees are being revived.

Tatyana Zhdanova, the MacArthur foundation: *“The idea of creation of the Board of trustees arose in June, 2005 when the ceremony of the official announcement of opening EHU-International in Vilnius was held in Lithuania This idea was suggested by the president of the MacArthur Foundation Jonathan Fanton. Some time in the past he was president of “New School for Social Research”, a very large and well-known university in the USA, which began its activities as a university in exile as in the 1930s a considerable amount of scientists from Europe moved to New York. Jonathan Fanton took great interest in the life of EHU and very fruitfully cooperated with other colleagues over the creation of the Board of trustees. The Board includes many well-known people from different countries who are highly respectable in the university world. They are presidents and rectors of the most outstanding universities or former presidents and rectors of such famous universities as Harvard University, Columbia University, the university of Luxembourg and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Many other known universities are represented on the Board. Its task is to support EHU and its efforts aimed at ensuring its further life and development to serve as a source of high-quality education for Belarusian students.*

EHU is a unique project supported by us, first of all, because of its destiny. It is unique because it was closed in Belarus and, consequently, it had to move to another country. Russian universities work where they were created but they also look for financing and address foreign funds.

I believe EHU was a very important university for Belarus. As far as I know the quality of education received by EHU graduates was and still remains very high. It is such a shame that EHU was forced to move to a different country. I think the significance of this university is that it sets standards in the field of social sciences and humanities. Science has no borders. It is important that EHU continues to exist and that its graduates work successfully. Many of them will continue to be engaged in science while many others will teach, and it is very important.

EHU does not exist as a political force. The university is an educational establishment and its task is to remain this kind of institution that is perceived as an educational establishment but not at all as a political party. Moreover, EHU does not receive support from political forces. We are not a political force. We are a philanthropic organization, and there are many organizations like ours in the USA. But they, too, do not get support from political forces. The difference is that we are a little larger than others including those who support EHU. But we are not involved in politics, we have no relation either to the US government or to any political parties or organizations in the USA, we are simply a private charitable foundation. We have decided that we support an educational project in Russia and in Belarus, but it so happened that EHU moved from Belarus to Lithuania. So now we support EHU-International in Lithuania. The fact that Academician Mikhailov, EHU rector, approaches us has nothing to do with politics. In the USA there are many universities which operate thanks to philanthropic funds.”

Exile to Europe contains many positive sides. From inadequate classrooms (former premises of a dormitory) we moved into a modern building with all the necessary technical facilities in a quiet green area of Vilnius. The acuteness of standard problems connected with the initial stage of the organization of the educational process such as shortage of classrooms, flaws in the educational schedule, etc. is gradually disappearing. Today we can already say that EHU students never had such comfortable conditions for studying. Vilnius is almost an ideal place for university life as it is a cozy city with European infrastructure, a rich cultural life, and friendly attitude to its post-Soviet neighbors. Since 2008 EHU students and teachers have got an opportunity to move freely around the countries of the European Union.

Every cloud has a silver lining...

Lithuania became our second home. We quickly understood how much we have in common over ideological schemes and political conflicts. In Lithuania we found again not only the values of academic freedom and open thinking but also versatile help from the Lithuanian state. We got not simply new colleagues but real friends. Thank you all for understanding and support! We hope that we will be interesting for Lithuanian society and will be able to make our feasible contribution to the intellectual landscape of this European country.

All this was not loss-free. For objective reasons EHU in exile could not renew the work of whole faculties (theology, economy, psychology, political science, information technologies) and departments (foreign languages) with wise heads (Metropolitan Philaret, Gennady Kuchinsky, Andrey Bakanov, Alexander Gorelik, etc.), highly professional teachers and talented students. Many staff members of our corporation including a number of key figures had to leave the university for reasons of deteriorating health, psychological pressure which was put in various forms on EHU employees and their relatives as well as household circumstances.

Vice-rector Tatyana Galko had to retire. We lost the ardent motor of EHU everyday life whose role during the crisis period is difficult to overestimate. She literally took upon herself the "tenth wave" of the multitude of administrative problems connected with the closing of the university in Minsk and passed through herself high-voltage psychological currents of responsibility for the reviving university. At that Tatyana Evgenievna showed the greatest concern for each member of the university community, be it a student or a mature teacher, finding for everyone special words of help and encouragement.

The dean of the art studies faculty Larissa Gusakovskaya also left. She had created a warm home-like atmosphere at the faculty and in every possible way supported young teachers in their search. She set an example of thoughtful adherence to her principles and the art of benevolence for everybody who knew her.



Professor Y. Stulov



E. Yushko

The financial director Alexey Bezugly, who had come to EHU just after graduation and who had turned not simply into a respected financier but into an unconditional moral authority, was compelled to leave. In the conditions of monstrously complicated accounting connected with the objective specificity of EHU as an experimental private educational institution, he not only simply impeccably and efficiently ran financial affairs but also acted as a kind of arbitration judge on many issues concerning intra-university life being a sample of honesty and rationalism. Zoya Pavlovna Yaroshevich, Elena Nikolaevna Yushko, Nina Vladimirovna Sokolova and other employees of the financial department of the university were Alexey's colleagues and they were also loyal to the university and fearless in all the ordeals which they had to go through even after the university was closed in Minsk. They were all highly professional (even the Committee of State Control could not but admit it during an extended and ferocious check of the tormented university!).

We try not to lose sight of our former colleagues and maintain relations with them. With the emergence of our veterans there appeared the genre of "meetings of veterans" of different generations as actually we have a lot to recollect besides the ordinary working routine. EHU preserves intimate, almost home-like traditions from the times of the foundation of the university with tea drinking at the departments and a new corporate culture of university classic-style receptions and small secular soirées in EHU headquarters is being created.

In general we can say that the history of EHU is not three consecutive transformations in which one condition is replaced by a qualitatively different one. It is possible to compare the history of EHU with a Russian doll when smaller forms are put inside bigger ones: inside there is "the smallest doll" of the already almost legendary "esoteric" community packed into the schoolmistress of the classical university enclosed, in turn, into the glamorous maid of the net university. These layers of the internal tradition without becoming an archival cargo resound with each other like strings, forming a chord of modern EHU.



EHU did not at once become the phenomenon we know today. The university in 1995–2004 and the university in 2008 are in many respects different universities. There is one thing that is “stable” in EHU: it is its variability, dynamism, ability to transform and adapt to time and situations and to generate new tendencies.

We believe that new plots in EHU history will be written by many generations of students and teachers. We have strong reasons for optimism. Firstly, it is solidarity and energy of the university community that managed to do what was practically impossible when in absolutely inconceivable terms educational activity was restored. Out of nothing curricula were designed, procured and are being successfully carried out. Secondly, it is a very considerable international support – not only material. EHU has been accepted by the international university community as an equal partner. It connects us with a huge tank of intellectual, information, organizational resources and supplies us with the air of academic freedom and scientific search.

For us, for all those who have lived together through this short (by academic standards) but pressed history, the European Humanities University is more than just a work place. EHU is a unique chance for self-realization. Here the possibilities of constant professional growth are not simply provided for; all the time you are expected to introduce new research projects, scientific publications and original courses. EHU is an experience of being included in a remarkable academic community where colleagues are united not only by business matters but, first of all, by human trust and solidarity. We began a common cause, together coped with our common trouble, the closing of the university in Minsk, and like people from the wrecked ship built our life anew on a different coast. EHU is not only creative teachers who look for new things but also inquisitive students with whom it is hard but also interesting to be as they have their position, they are active, ask difficult questions and in a dialogue the students are accepted, more likely, as younger colleagues rather than objects of a teacher's influence.

Finally, EHU is a university-project and its essence is not limited by what it is – current educational and scientific programs; rather it outlines a certain future. By its very existence this small university punches a gap in that ideological stone-like condition which froze the social and cultural landscape of Belarus and testifies to the possibility of dramatic changes.

For us EHU is the name of hope

Since the Middle Ages there have been cases when due to regular oppression of local authorities universities including the whole university corporation, all the teachers and students with no exceptions, moved from one area to another. Knowledge does not know borders. We freshened the historical memory about this nature of the university. On the other hand, in the 21st century information technologies become a major form of higher education and a factor that in many respects defines its content. Information starts to replace knowledge as such and becomes a special object of consumption. In these conditions humanitarian preparation turns into an irreplaceable component of higher education capable of balancing information technocracy and at least in thinking to determine critical limits of global consumerism. Humanitarian preparation promotes keeping in the field of vision the ultimate goals of generating and distributing increasing flows of information. It develops the ability to substantiate the general with the particular, to generalize instead of infinitely going over the empirical data no matter how accessible they might be. Humanitarianism reveals and cultivates ethical and aesthetic measurements of information technologies and mass media, critically analyzes the effects which they generate on the level of the social system as a whole. The effects which can now be imperceptible hidden behind the flashes of technological innovations and the flow of advantages provided by technologies and media but which can change society and the human being beyond recognition in future.

In this context European Humanities University carrying out its main mission of cultural convergence of Belarus and Europe is called upon to think not only about tomorrow but also about a more remote prospect of a common Europe.





First masters (Vilnius)



CONCLUSION

MYKOŁO ROMERIO UNIVERSITETAS

VIEŠOJO
ADMINISTRAVIMO
FAKULTETAS

EUROPOS HUMANITARINIS
UNIVERSITETAS

EUROPEAN HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY
ЕЎРАПЕЙСКИ ГУМАЊТАРНЫ
УНІВЕРСІТЭТ



EHU personnel (Vilnius)

CONCLUSION

In the revolutionary times of “perestroika” we began a difficult and interesting business called EHU. We have built a classical university which Belarus could be rightly proud of. In the critical years of the restoration of “the old regime” in Belarus we did not give in to the provocation of the authorities which closed the university. We did not sacrifice our common cause for the sake of personal interests and did not go into a head-on political collision with the regime. Today we are even more convinced that the education of a new generation of thinking and open-minded citizens of our country is the most reliable contribution to the new history of Belarus. As never before, we are committed to the principles of critical thinking, free dialogue, professionalism, high level of education, and creativity as the basic elements of European culture.

We not only preserved the university but also gave a new impulse to its development. We have learnt to live in the conditions of constant challenges and changes. We only want to believe that the new history of EHU will be connected with the challenges and changes of the global information society and with the challenges of the future, not of the past. Now we are again experiencing a feeling of a new beginning and a new life where the bitterness of loss is getting dissolved. However, a feeling of resentment persists for the taste of exile is bitterness added to the bread of hospitality. We hope to return to Belarus believing into our common future. We work for the sake of the European future of Belarus. For us it is neither a question of geopolitics nor a tug-of-war between “the centers of power”. It is a question of the level of society's civilizedness.

For us the future is connected with the understanding that Culture is the main politics.