

Annual Report of CIFS Activities: 2004

Submitted by the Chair

February 3, 2005

Committee Members:

Edward Gerjuoy, *Chair*

Harjit S. Ahluwalia

Ani Aprahamian

J.D. Garcia, *Vice Chair*

John Gillespie

Roberto Merlin

Jen-Chieh Peng

Ivan K. Schuller

Oleg A. Starykh

During 2004 CIFS has continued to meet its APS Bylaws charge of “monitoring concerns regarding human rights of scientists throughout the world.” CIFS 2004 activities in furtherance of this role are summarized below. For convenience in comparing with the CIFS 2003 Annual Report, and because for the most part CIFS activities during 2004 have been a continuation of efforts undertaken during 2003, this report closely follows the organization of the 2003 Annual Report.

1. Efforts on behalf of colleagues beleaguered under various pressures, abroad and here at home:

Russia.

During 2003 CIFS wrote many letters to high level Russian political figures on behalf of Valentin Danilov and Igor Sutyagin, both of whom had been charged with treason under circumstances indicating violations of their human rights. In April 2004 Sutyagin was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Danilov, who had been acquitted in a 2003 trial, was retried in 2004 and this time convicted; he received a 14 year prison sentence.

CIFS joined with AAAS and a number of other organizations in a joint letter to Russian President Putin requesting Sutyagin’s release. In addition several CIFS members drafted a story, published in the August/September 2004 issue of APS News, reviewing the facts of the Sutyagin case and urging APS members to individually protest his

imprisonment. On 12/1/04 Helen Quinn sent Putin an official APS letter, drafted by CIFS, protesting Danilov's incarceration.

Belarus.

As in 2003, during 2004 CIFS vainly continued to seek information of any kind about the status and physical condition of Professor Yuri Bandazhevsky, who in 2001 received an eight year prison sentence.

China.

In March 2004, Wang Youcai, a physicist whose incarceration CIFS had protested for years, was released from prison and permitted to emigrate to the United States. Thereupon CIFS, after congratulating Wang on his release, invited him to the first (on 5/22) of its two 2004 meetings, with the intent of learning whether CIFS could improve the effectiveness of its work on behalf of China's human rights victims. Wang, who expressed his sincere gratitude to CIFS for its support during his imprisonment, thought that scientists who visit China should quietly bring up the cases of chosen specific prisoners. He also said that letters to prison authorities, inquiring about named individual prisoners, definitely improve prisoners' living conditions.

During the remainder of 2004 CIFS discussed these suggestions of Wang's, as well as other recommendations, with a number of persons familiar with the China human rights problem, including especially John Kamm of the Dui Hua Foundation. Mr. Kamm, who himself had worked very hard to secure Wang's release and who since 2003 had been advising CIFS about how best to deal with China's human rights violations, received a MacArthur Award in 2004 for his human rights efforts. Unfortunately no specific CIFS actions have yet resulted from these discussions, other than a notice on the CIFS web page requesting that colleagues attending Conferences in China contact the CIFS Chair. It is hoped that this deficiency will be remedied in 2005, because we are aware of a number of unjustly imprisoned Chinese scientists and students who need and deserve CIFS help.

Iran.

Hadi Hadizadeh, who finally was admitted to the U.S. in 2003 after support and pleas from many groups including CIFS, still has not managed to bring his entire family into this country. In particular, despite yeoman efforts, his daughter Niloofar has been unable to secure a visa permitting entry into the U.S. and remains in Iran. Recently Hadi's wife has returned to Iran to be with Niloofar, therewith additionally disrupting Hadi's family life. CIFS has urged Hadi to keep in contact with, and to heed the advice of, the APS Office of International affairs which is very knowledgeable on visa issues.

Cuba.

CIFS continued to discuss Cuba's human rights violations during 2004, but took no concrete actions to remedy those violations. In this regard CIFS followed the informed advice of APS 2003 President Myriam Sarachik, who believes there is not much CIFS can do other than alerting colleagues going to conferences in Cuba to the possibility of visiting prisoners' families. CIFS decided to put a notice on its web page paralleling its China conference request; more precisely, CIFS now also is asking anyone attending a conference in Cuba to contact the CIFS Chair.

In early 2004 the APS received a letter from the head of the Cuban Physical Society asking APS endorsement of two conferences in Cuba. This letter occasioned a suggestion from Myriam Sarachik that CIFS consider whether APS should have a policy on endorsing conferences in foreign nations, which were notorious violators of human rights. After some discussion, CIFS decided that it would not be wise to set up a policy that based APS endorsements of foreign conferences on human rights considerations, because how best to improve the fate of human rights victims tends to require case by case analyses.

United States.

The 2003 Annual Report regretted that CIFS had found itself dealing with a number of cases involving the actions of United States governmental agencies, especially agencies concerned with alleged visa violations. Unfortunately this trend has continued during 2004, as we now elaborate:

B. Djordjevic.

Dr. Djordjevic's case continues from 2003. He received a physics Ph.D. in this country after arriving from Serbia, now about thirteen years ago. At some point he requested asylum, which was denied. After this denial his then attorneys failed to take the necessary actions to prevent the denial from jeopardizing Djordjevic's legal status in the U.S. As a result, he was arrested in 2003 and held without bail awaiting deportation until finally granted bail on Christmas Day 2003 by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. As of 12/31/04 Djordjevic's appeal (via new attorneys) of his deportation order remains under consideration by the Sixth Circuit; a denial of the appeal could subject him to immediate deportation. In the meantime he continues to be employed by Verizon in a highly responsible capacity

In October of 2003 the then APS President Myriam Sarachik wrote Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Ridge asking that Djordjevic be permitted to remain in this country. On 12/18/03 DHS replied that it could not discuss Djordjevic's case with the APS without Djordjevic's written permission. On 2/17/04, Djordjevic's permission having been received, APS President Helen Quinn again wrote Secretary Ridge, repeating the request that Djordjevic be permitted to remain in this country, and asking that the Chair of CIFS be permitted to meet with a DHS representative so as to explain the importance of retaining within our borders persons with Djordjevic's highly specialized physicist skills. On 3/29/04 the DHS replied to Helen Quinn's letter, saying that it could not discuss the Djordjevic case with CIFS because his case was pending before the courts.

This is where CIFS attempts to directly engage DHS in a discussion of the Djordjevic case still stand. CIFS did write letters to Congressman Tom Davis (in whose district Djordjevic resides) and to physicist Congressman Vern Ehlers requesting their help in coming to some meeting of minds with DHS. It appears that each of these Congressmen took some action, which however was not divulged to CIFS. Whatever actions were taken by Davis and/or Ehlers did not cause DHS to contact CIFS, and had no apparent effect on DHS attempts to deport Djordjevic.

S. Al-Arian.

Dr. Al-Arian's case was discussed in the CIFS 2003 Annual Report; CIFS concerns about the case were expressed in a 2003 letter to Attorney General Ashcroft. During 2004 CIFS took no further action, though it continued to follow the case.

Detained Iraqi Scientists.

Case Western Reserve physics professor Mano Singham, a former CIFS member, brought the plight of detained Iraqi scientists to CIFS attention. Singham especially mentioned the case of Amer Al-Saadi, who had been the chief contact between Sadaam Hussein and the UN WMD inspectors. When the war started he voluntarily turned himself in to the U.S. authorities. Since that time he has been detained under circumstances that have not been revealed.

CIFS felt it should be concerned about the Al-Saadi case and similar Iraqi scientist cases, but found it impossible to obtain any further information about them. In particular neither Amnesty International nor Human Rights Watch could add any new information.

2. Interactions with Other Human Rights Organizations.

In December 2003 CIFS participated in a meeting organized by the AAAS Science and Human Rights Action Network (AAASHRAN) and attended by a number of professional organizations concerned with human rights, including the Committee of Concerned Scientists (CCS) and the Scholars-at-Risk Network mentioned in our 2003 Annual Report. The purpose of the meeting was to set up a Human Rights Coordinating Council, a project that CIFS strongly favors. Unfortunately there has been no progress in setting up the Council during 2004. In the meantime, even though no Coordinating Council has been activated, throughout 2004 CIFS continued its past practices of exchanging information on human rights cases with various other human rights groups, such as AASHRAN and CCS.

3. On-going issues.

Publicity.

The 2003 Annual Report remarked on the desirability of better publicizing CIFS activities. Efforts to accomplish this objective were undertaken during 2004. In particular the CIFS Chair has organized an invited paper human rights session, to be presented at the 2005 March meeting; one of the talks in this session will be devoted to the history of APS activities (through CIFS of course) in support of human rights. In addition, during 2004 CIFS discussed with the editor of the APS Forum on Physics and Society (FPS) newsletter Physics and Society (P&S) the possibility of regularly publishing articles describing CIFS cases and related activities. The P&S editor has expressed interest in this possibility, but CIFS has not yet assigned its members the responsibilities needed to bring the possibility to fruition.

The Sakharov Prize.

The 2003 Annual Report noted that the APS council had authorized creation of a new APS prize, the Sakharov Prize, intended to honor scientists who have made important contributions to the preservation of human rights. During 2004 the needed fundraising for this new Prize went forward highly successfully under Andrew Sessler's dedicated leadership. It appears that the necessary funds will be acquired in time to award the first Sakharov Prize in 2006. It further appears that CIFS will have the primary responsibility for recommending Sakharov Prize honorees, a responsibility that CIFS welcomes.

4. Summary.

2004, like 2003, has been a very busy year for CIFS. Carrying out our 2004 CIFS activities has been greatly facilitated by the sympathetic assistance we have received from Dr. Amy Flatten, the new (as of 2/1/04) Director of the APS Office of International

affairs. Her thorough familiarity with present U.S. visa policies was particularly helpful. As in so many past years, CIFS activities would have ground to a near halt had we not, at any and all times, been able to call on the friendly always reliably effective support of our Committee Administrator Michele Irwin.