

Armenian National Science and Education Fund (ANSEF)

The brain drain out of Armenia is in full flow! Highly qualified scientists, engineers and other professionals, with a wealth of experience, have been lost to Armenia by emigration or simple lack of productive employment opportunities. They are either leaving the country, or are being forced to seek menial employment simply to provide food and shelter for themselves and their families. Their present circumstances are grim, and, if this trend continues, the future is even grimmer.

Their situation is similar to that in England and Europe in the aftermath of World War II. There, the resulting "brain drain" affected every facet of scientific and professional activity in England and Europe. That is what is happening in Armenia now. As in Europe in the immediate post-war period, highly competent anthropologists, archeologists, astronomers, astrophysicists, biologists, chemists, computer scientists, engineers of all disciplines, medical researchers, physicists, zoologists, etc. presently lack basic needs to carry on research in their specializations. Many have not been paid even their meager salaries for months. They lack basic, usable laboratory facilities, instrumented with even rudimentary equipment. It is a "no-win" situation and a direct result of Armenia's economic restrictions.

In post-war Europe, priming of the economies by the Marshall Plan relieved budgetary restrictions and provided work for the scientists, making it unnecessary for them to seek employment outside their countries. The same can be expected in Armenia. We desperately need a "Marshall Plan" for Armenia's scientists.

ANSEF is being organized to provide the kind of help to the Armenian scientific community that the Marshall Plan provided for Europe's scientific community. It will operate under the auspices of FAR (Fund for Armenian Relief) to help in securing funding for scientific researchers in Armenia. The short-term purpose is to help Armenian professionals and scientists remain in Armenia by interim funding which will allow them to work productively in their country. For the long term, the ANSEF plan is to provide steady support for science and the humanities in Armenia.

To attain the short term objective quickly, ANSEF will seek sources of funding for specific research projects, and participate in the preparation of proposals from Armenia, responding to requests for proposals (RFP) issued by agencies in the United States and elsewhere. RFPs are published every month by the U. S. agencies such as the National

Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the various departments of the Executive Branch of the Government. Before awards can be expected, however, Armenian scientists would benefit from a "track record" based on recent publications. To develop a current track record it is essential to get Armenia's scientists working again. To get going, small grants from ANSEF will be used to fund relatively small projects. As results begin to be published, it will be easier to secure funding from the U. S. and other countries. The important objective is to provide useful work which will demonstrate the quality that can be expected from Armenia. Hopefully, it will also keep Armenia's scientists and engineers at home.

The raising of funds and their dispensation will be kept totally under control of ANSEF. For selection of appropriate scientific fields and of scientists to man the proposals, ANSEF will collaborate with the leadership of the Armenian National Academy of Science and major universities.

In this increasingly "High Tech" world, it is absolutely essential that Armenia make effective use of its highly trained professional scientists and engineers. They are there now, available and desperate for financial support to allow them to work. And it is equally essential that future professionals be encouraged to enter specializations of their choice, with the expectation that they will be able to earn livelihoods in their own country. This is the only road to scientific independence open to Armenia. And scientific independence is one of the surest ways to economic independence.

Persons who wish to contribute to this critically important endeavor may make their tax-deductible contributions to the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), 630 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Those interested in donating appreciated securities should contact Mrs. Nouné Sukiasian at the FAR office in New York at telephone number 212-889-5150.

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