

From: National Association for Armenian Studies
and Research ("Hatsagayin Hayagitakan Miuthim")
404 Park Square Building
Boston 16, Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 1955

PLANS FOR HARVARD CHAIR OF ARMENIAN
STUDIES RECEIVED WITH ENTHUSIASM

BOSTON, MASS. -- A capacity audience, attending the first public meeting of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research on March 2, enthusiastically endorsed the plans for a nationwide effort for the establishment at Harvard University of the first endowed Chair of Armenian Studies in America.

Held in Harvard's famed Phillips Brooks House, the meeting heard Professor William L. Langer, Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, bring the official greetings of the University. He praised the Association's efforts to bring about the advancement of Armenian studies in America and pledged the University's support and cooperation.

Stating that Armenian studies are important for the understanding of Middle Eastern, and even world, history, Professor Langer assured the audience that when the money is raised for the establishment of the chair, the University would spare no effort in finding "the best man in his field in the world today wherever he may be" to occupy the Chair of Armenian Studies.

Why Harvard Selected

The chairman of the Association's Board of Directors, Manoog S. Young, revealed that the selection of Harvard University as the site of the first chair of Armenian studies in America came only after careful consideration by the group. He stated that it is important that the first chair be at a renown university such as Harvard with its excellent library, instructional, and research facilities and staff and with its established record of support of Armenian studies through courses of instruction, research, and publication.

Professor Richard N. Frye, associate professor of Middle Eastern Studies and instructor in Armenian, stated that "we are abysmal in our ignorance of Armenian

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history." He added that the Armenian people have a rich heritage that needs to be brought to the attention of the world through a systematic program of research and study on a university level.

Greetings from Governor

The audience of nearly 200 heard the official greetings of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the form of a telegram from Governor Christian A. Herter. "May I congratulate the Association on its plans for the advancement of Armenian studies through scholarship, research, and publication and wish for this movement the greatest of success," the Governor's message stated.

Congratulating the founding members of the Association for taking such a "bold and necessary step," Professor Giuliano Bonfante of Princeton University in a special message wrote, "The antiquity and the importance of the Armenian nation, a bridge between Europe and Asia, make Armenian studies an essential element of every serious and complete culture." He added that no serious scholar in related fields of study "can afford safely to ignore Armenian studies."

Possible Within Three Years

Other feature speakers included Dr. Arra S. Avakian, Armenian scholar, teacher, and engineer; and G. John Gregory, member of the Massachusetts Board of Education. Mr. Gregory stressed that the endowment of a professorship at Harvard University presents an unprecedented opportunity for world wide recognition of Armenian history and culture, and therefore called upon all Armenian-Americans to support this vital project. Also on the program were Miss Mary Avedikian, violinist, who played a group of Armenian numbers, accompanied at the piano by Miss Shake C. Ahoyian.

The treasurer, J. Mark Kolligian, revealed that the Association has already received some initial donations but that the main campaign to raise the \$300,000 necessary for the endowment of the chair at Harvard would not get underway until the fall. He stressed that it would be a nationwide campaign. "Certainly it should be possible to raise this amount within the next three years," Kolligian added. By the end of this year he hoped a research fellowship could be set up with an initial

endowed fund of \$50,000. He revealed that for tax exemption purposes checks should be made out to: "Harvard University - Armenian Studies Fund."

The Association hopes that the establishment of the Harvard chair will merely be the first project in a broad program for the advancement of Armenian studies in America. "At first we will spend 90 percent of our time on the early endowment of scholarships, fellowships, and a professorship at Harvard," the chairman Young said, "but later on we intend to branch out considerably." He hoped that eventually similar chairs would be set up at other universities, but he added, "Let's get one established first, here at Harvard, before we start thinking about others."

Membership Appeal Successful

As a result of a membership appeal made at the meeting, it was announced that there are now over 100 members in the newly created Association. Chairman Young revealed that already there are members from New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. It was also disclosed that the first annual meeting of the Association would be held in the spring at which time a permanent Board of Directors would be elected and other organizational policies established.

The chairman added that the Founding Members of the Association number over 50 prominent persons well known in academic, professional, business, and religious circles. He stressed that the Association is a non-profit organization and is truly non-partisan, non-political, and non-sectarian in character. At this point he introduced the pastors of the local Armenian churches as members of the founders' group. They are Rev. Papken Maksoudian, Rev. Y. D. Magratchian, and Rev. Yervant H. Hadidian. Later he disclosed that also among the founders are Rev. Arton Ashjian and Rev. William Sahakian.

At present the officers of the Board of Directors are, in addition to Young, Dr. Arta S. Avakian, first vice-chairman; K. Merton Bosoian, second vice-chairman; Haig Der Manuelian, secretary; and J. Mark Kolligian, treasurer. Members at large of the Board include Thomas T. Amirian, G. John Gregory, and Jack Guveyan.

Further information on the Association and its program can be had by writing to the Association at 404 Park Square Building, Boston 16, Massachusetts.