FORMER SOVIET UNION

Russian Scientists Gain Legal Rights ...

MOSCOW—In mid-July, just as Russia's parliament was winding down for its summer recess, politicians provided a double bonus for the country's scientists. The parliament finally passed a long-awaited law that will guarantee scientists freedom of access to unclassified information and freedom to publish and apply for grants without having to gain permission from their bosses. And at virtually the same time, the science ministry presented its Doctrine for the Development of Russian Science, an outline for the management of research that was adopted by presidential decree after an 18-month delay.

Scientists and government officials consider both documents to be milestones. "The law legitimizes the rights of researchers which they obtained de facto during the liberalization of the country," says Mikhail Glubokovsky, deputy chair of the Committee on Science and Education of the Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament. "Now they've got these rights in practice, and they're guaranteed by law," he says.

The science law began life in mid-1994 when three rival versions were presented to the parliament by different factions (*Science*, 18 November 1994, p. 1153). A unified draft was first debated in the Duma a year later (*Science*, 30 June 1995, p. 1844) and by late autumn 1995 was voted through and passed to the upper house, the Federation Council, and the president's office for approval. However, the copy sent to the president was different from the version approved by the Duma: Article 6, which determined the status of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) and its rights to the land and property of its institutes, had been tampered with by the former deputy chair of the Duma Committee on Culture, Education, and Science, Viktor Shevelukha (*Science*, 12 January, p. 139). President Boris Yeltsin vetoed the law.

Earlier this year, Yeltsin settled the issue of the RAS's status by issuing a decree declaring it a state body with the right to "operative management and economic authority" over federal property. Science Minister Boris Saltykov, a reformist, vigorously opposed the hard-line RAS gaining ownership of its institutes, but has accepted Yeltsin's decree. Operative management, he says, is the same as ownership without the responsibilities: "In that sense, RAS has got a substantial advantage." The law, duly corrected, went back to the Duma and was passed this month.

The doctrine approved the same week has also had a mixed reception. It was put forward last year by Saltykov to protect reforms he had initiated at the ministry—such as introducing a Western-style competitive funding agency—against attacks from the RAS. In the end, so many scientific organizations wanted to put forward comments and suggestions on the draft doctrine that it took a year to produce a final version for Yeltsin to approve by presidential decree.

Glubokovsky agrees that the doctrine is important, calling it "a lodestar in the development of science," but faults it for not providing a detailed plan for the management of science. "A document of this kind, being a concrete plan, must set up concrete goals and concrete deadlines for achieving them," he says, such as a national telecommunications program and strengthening science outside the powerhouses of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Saltykov disagrees. The details, he says, will be filled in by future legislation: "The first of the necessary laws—the law on science—has finally been adopted, and there will be others to follow."

–Andrey Allakhverdov

Andrey Allakhverdov is a science writer in Moscow.

FORMER SOVIET UNION

... But Foundation Funds Hit a Snag

The stage was set in Moscow earlier this week for a welcome announcement: A private U.S. foundation—the Civilian Research and Development Foundation for the Independent States of the FSU (CRDF)—was finally ready to unveil its initial grant winners throughout the former Soviet Union (FSU). But Russian scientists, at least, will have to keep the champagne on ice. Shortly before *Science* went to press, Russia's Ministry of Science asked to evaluate the results of CRDF's peer-review panels, to ensure that they conform with the Ministry's own ranking of proposals and funding priorities. CRDF is now planning to announce the Russian grantees in September.

CRDF is, however, moving ahead with projects in other FSU countries. Earlier this week, it began contacting scientists on the first 18 Ukrainian projects to work out payment and other details of grants that will each pay on average $50,000 over 2 years. It has also set aside $400,000 to fund first-time forays out of the country for non-Russian FSU scientists to attend conferences and visit laboratories, and $800,000 for a few large grants for equipment that could be used throughout an entire region; reviewers are still sorting through the regional proposals. "Everything we do will be salutary for creating a better climate for civilian research," says CRDF associate director Tom Owens.

The holdup on the Russian grants is a minor setback compared to the troubles in the early days of the program. Initially approved by the U.S. Congress back in 1992, CRDF, the brainchild of former House Science Committee Chair Representative George Brown (D–CA), is intended to help spur the conversion of the FSU's military R&D complex to a civilian role. It was to have been set up with an endowment of up to $25 million from the Defense Department (DOD), but the Pentagon balked at spending money on a program that was not tailored exclusively for weapons scientists. After months of wrangling, DOD agreed in October 1994 to kick in $10 million that CRDF could spend only if it raised matching funds. Billionaire financier George Soros announced in May 1995 that he would pitch in $5 million. With $10 million in the bank, the National Science Foundation (NSF) last summer set up CRDF as a private nonprofit organization, as Brown's legislation required. So far, it has received more than 3000 proposals.

CRDF requires FSU countries to come up with a percentage of grant funds based on their per capita income. Russia has committed up to $3 million to its grant winners, and Ukraine up to $1.5 million. "It's a small amount of money, but a very important resource for some of our best scientists," says Boris Saltykov, Russia's science minister. Smaller countries are cobbling together money as best they can; Armenia, for example, has raised $3800 from its expatriate community in the United States.

CRDF is now trying to raise more U.S. funds. If it doesn't match the remaining $5 million in DOD money by the end of the fiscal year it will lose it. The National Institutes of Health earlier this month agreed to provide $1 million for a separate CRDF-NIH grant program for biomedical and behavioral research (*Science*, 19 July, p. 299). NSF director Neal Lane has "expressed a willingness" to contribute $2 million in NSF funds, but the House appropriations subcommittee that oversees NSF's budget "has questions about the best use of NSF's funds at this time," says an NSF official. As for the final $2 million, sources say the White House intends to ante $1 million via the State Department if CRDF raises the final $1 million on its own. CRDF officials are now busy courting other agencies.

–Richard Stone