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RICHARD G. HOVANNISIAN
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An essay in tribute and in attempt to sketch his life and work*

Key words – Armenian Genocide, Activism, historiography, conference, Republic of Armenia, Genocide scholarship, oral history, Turkish propaganda, denialism.

Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenian treasure, the greatest historian of the Caucasus, one of the most prominent icons of the modern period, a monumental figure in the field of Armenian Studies, a prolific author and editor, a guiding light for future generations, preeminent historian and scholar, a trailblazer who elevated the Armenian Cause to new heights, a titan in the field of Armenian Studies—an academic discipline that he shaped with his groundbreaking scholarship and professionalism, a great mentor who inspired and demanded and educated multiple generations of scholars who followed his footsteps....*

These and still many more were the accolades inundating social media, mourning the loss of the man who had just relinquished life, leaving behind a monumental legacy in the field of Armenian Studies. And none of these words were exaggerations but in fact a roadmap or even a challenge for me to try to accomplish the impossible task to construe and present, within the limits of this journal article, the life and work of someone who had been my mentor, my role model, my inspiration, my colleague, my friend. I will do my best, holding in my heart the pride of having been a part of a minuscule portion of his activities, and cherishing the honor of having been trusted to write this article for *Vem*, a reputable academic journal in Armenia.

* Հոդվածն ընդունվել է տպագրության 12.09.2023:

A glance into a previous work to see the early formation of Richard’s character and outlook on life¹

Richard was born in Tulare, California, a small town more peaceful than nearby Fresno,² with less internal skirmishes among followers of opposing Armenian political parties, and more importantly, with less discrimination and prejudice and more tolerance on the part of the local Americans toward the Armenian newcomers. His father, Kaspar Gavroian, son of Hovhannes,³ registered as Kaspar Hovannisian upon entering the USA at Ellis Island in 1920. He was twenty years old at the time and had spent five turbulent years on his own as the sole surviving member of his family. Kaspar had come to join the small community of Armenians in Tulare, mostly refugees from the Kharpert region like himself. For these wretched people driven out of their beloved village of Bazmashen (Pazmashen) Tulare was very much like home. Kaspar brought his village along with him to impose upon the family he formed in Tulare, as well as the iron fist that had used a rifle against the Turks at Garin (or Karin, today’s Erzerum) with Andranik’s (Antranig) troop, to rule over his four sons. Kaspar married Siroon Nalbandian, a seventeen-year-old high school student, apparently against her will, but just right for Kaspar, because she was coming from a Kharbertsi family and sympathizers of ARF (Dashnaktsutun). Siroon or Sarah—an Americanized name she preferred to use—had emigrated to the U.S. at the age of three with her parents before the Genocide. Growing up in the U.S., she had fully adopted the American ways that were incompatible with her husband’s views. But she had also learned how to get around them and still be an obedient wife.

The image of Richard Hovannisian as a second-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide, his difficult journey, his effort to distance himself from his father and his strict upbringing and gain the open space of America and the

1 I have relied on my earlier work, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature, The Second Generation Responds* (Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, 2015. See, pp. 47-50), to demonstrate the early formation of Richard Hovannisian’s character and outlook on life, which I believe will help to understand the steps he took later and the trajectory of the life and career he chose. The excerpt includes additional information acquired later.

In my study of inter-generational impact of the Genocide, Richard is regarded as one example among other second-generation survivors, whose responses to their parents’ past trauma is remarkably multi-faceted.

2 Indeed, Armenians in Fresno suffered a great deal of discrimination and restrictions on landholding, employment, and membership in social clubs. They were even called “Fresno Indians.” Many Armenians changed their last name to sound more American or left the city to escape the humiliation.

3 As fate would have it, Hovhannes had come to the U.S. before WWI, lived a few years in Tulare and gone back to his birthplace only to be drafted in the Turkish army and killed during the War.

multiple opportunities available to an aspiring young man, comes across clearly in Garin Hovannisian’s narrative, *Family of Shadows*.⁴

Richard was Kaspar’s third son. Unlike his older brothers, Richard did not fit the macho mold his father had created for his sons. “That son of a gun,” Kaspar would say. “He’ll never amount to anything” (GKH, 54). Richard could not understand his father, “an angry man, a man consumed by a ferocious, unpredictable temper” (GKH, 53), who expressed a “violent resentment of his youngest son’s inadequacy.” This man, so happy and relaxed in the company of Armenian friends, would turn his rage on his son, “a belt [would] appear in his hands, and manic shouts of ‘Richard! Richard! Richard!’ would echo in the house” (GKH, 51).

Richard could not imagine the source of his father’s temper and intolerance toward his own son. How could he have known that such behavior is typical in a survivor of the Genocide, scapegoating someone in the family to pour out, sometimes violently, his longings and his frustration, his futile attempt to cast off the shadow of unhealed trauma? His father never talked about his ordeal during those trying years. And then there were his father’s frightening cries in the middle of the night, “Վայ, մայրիկ, վայ” (Oh, Mother, oh!). “The fearless, defiant man whom night and memory had returned to his childhood, to the banks of the bloody Euphrates” (GKH, 55), was helplessly reliving the past. How could Richard have known that this too is typical of a survivor of the Genocide? His father never talked about how a Kurd had snatched him from his mother’s embrace (GKH, 12). It was only a few months before Kaspar Hovannisian died in October 1970 that he allowed Richard to record the story of his ordeal. “He spoke about his mother, Heghnar, his brother, Gabriel. He spoke generously, emotionally, plainly. He remembered everything in fresh detail: the stroke of the sun and the scent of the mountain flower. It was as if a part of him had stayed behind in 1915, stayed with his mother and brother, stayed to die with his people” (GKH, 92).

But when Richard was still at a young and tender age, all he knew was that, despite his awe and respect for his father, he resented his manner. He felt alienated and he longed to escape, and escape he finally did after he graduated from high school. Rebellion was Richard’s response to the predicament of living under his father’s authority. From an early age he had been fascinated by international

4 Garin K. Hovannisian (GKH), *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory, and the Armenian American Dream* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010). Phrases in quotation marks followed by Garin Hovannisian’s initials and page numbers in parenthesis refer to this publication.

Interestingly, it took a member of the fourth generation, Kaspar’s great-grandson, Garin—named after the city where Kaspar had joined Andranik’s troop and taken up arms to fight the Turks in 1917—to undertake the research and pen the history of this extraordinary family some forty years after Kaspar’s death.

ideologies, and the liberal atmosphere of Berkeley and San Francisco was where he could pursue his freedom, his American dream. Looking back into his early years in Tulare, he considers himself “a tangential Armenian” (note # 17),⁵ “not enthusiastic about things Armenian” (note # 18). But curiously, what his strictly Armenian home and his very Armenian father had failed accomplish in him, his future wife, Vartiter Kotcholosian’s encouragement to strengthen his Armenian identity (note #21)], his participation in the San Francisco Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), his sojourn in Beirut, the influence and aura of Simon Vratsian [Vratzian],⁶ classes in the Armenian language at the Jemaran,⁷ endless hours of reading in the Armenian classics at the library of the American University of Beirut did, as did all the hard work to quench his “obsession to be able to read and write Armenian for future academic work and involvement” (note #30). “Richard’s Armenian identity had been activated” (GKH, 78), and his first major accomplishment was to read Vratsian’s *Hayastani Hanrapetutiuin* in four months (note # 32). By then, his father’s attitude had changed. He was proud of his son and his “high class” Armenian compared to the Kharpertsii dialect spoken in Tulare (note # 39). It was thrilling for him to see Richard’s “multi-part series in Armenian

⁵ A few months before his passing, Richard Hovannisian emailed me a 79-page document titled “RGH—*ABRIDGED NOTES*” consisting of 95 notes, succinct but detailed description of various stages of his life and activities from Tulare to Fresno, San Francisco, Beirut, Los Angeles, as well as many sojourns in cities all over United States and Europe for Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) conventions, university and public lectures, and conferences, meetings of organizations, in whose leadership he was always a prominent figure, such as the Armenian Assembly (later Armenian Assembly of America), Armenian National Institute, the Society for Armenian Studies, National Association of Armenian Studies, International Alert (an international organization with the goal of drawing attention to the warning signs of genocide), and many more. He had remarkable recollections from his early childhood, covering his adventures and endeavors, community activities with encyclopedic details of Armenian community life—social, cultural, and political—with the names of the major players in each field in America. The last note imparts the loss of Vartiter, his lifetime partner and beloved wife, a tremendous loss from which he never recovered.

The notes sometimes read as a travelog, other times they present the political analysis of the specific time and place he is in. In still other instances they read like the history of a specific place or community. The notes are followed by 6 Appendixes: one is a list of countries he visited, more than 80, many of them more than once and mostly accompanied by Vartiter. In the next Appendixes, Hovannisian lists his university lectures, academic positions held, awards and honors received, and finally a complete bibliography of his publications.

⁶ Simon Vratsian was the principal of Nshan Palandjian Jemaran in Beirut where Richard Hovannisian spent a year learning Armenian. During that period, Richard bonded with Vratsian, who had served as the last Prime Minister of independent Armenia before its Sovietization. As a symbol of the Armenian struggle for independence, Vratsian played a decisive role in Richard’s future academic endeavors.

⁷ Jemaran (Ճեմարան), literally meaning “walking place,” is the Armenian word, the equivalent of “academy” or “lyceum” used for ancient educational institutions. It refers to the Armenian college in Beirut (the word college is used with its French not American sense of the word), founded by Hamazkayin Armenian Cultural and Educational Society in 1930. It was renamed “Nshan Palandjian” in later years.

titled ‘Tebi Nshan Palandjian Jemaran’ (Toward the Nshan Palandjian Jemaran)’ published in late 1956 and early 1957 in *Asbarez* newspaper (note # 39).

And now to follow his course in academia and advocacy

In 1960 he was invited by the UCLA Near Eastern Center to teach two extension courses on Armenian culture and language at the Fresno State College campus. That was his first introduction into teaching in academia which he characterizes as “something like a one-eyed person leading the blind” (note # 47). In 1962 he began his lectureship at the Near Eastern Center at UCLA while Vartiter was still spending her residency in Fresno.⁸ A year later the family, with already two children, Raffi and Armen, born in Fresno, were permanently settled in Los Angeles. Richard Hovannisian was teaching at UCLA and Dr. Vartiter Kotcholozian Hovannisian was a medical doctor at Keizer-Permanente. Ani and Garo were born in Los Angeles.

With a full teaching schedule and public speaking engagements, Richard pursued his goal to receive a Ph.D., which he realized in 1966 in Near Eastern and Russian History, with an unofficial (because there was no Armenian program at that time) specialization in Armenian History. His dissertation was published in 1967, titled *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (364 pp.) with three more reprints afterwards.

The year 1967 coincided with the groundbreaking ceremony of the Armenian Genocide monument atop Bicknell Park in Montebello, California—the first in the U.S.—in whose realization Hovannisian had a significant input and involvement, especially in testifying against Turkish vocal protests, threats, and heavy lobbying with the local authorities. The grand opening of the monument took place in April 1968, with Richard Hovannisian as the master of ceremonies.⁹

Meanwhile, his excellence in teaching and positive student reviews gained him the favor of Gustave von Grunebaum, the director of the Near Eastern Center¹⁰ and secured him a permanent tenure-track position in the History Department in 1969.

8 They had married on March 2, 1957 in Fresno when he was teaching at Oakland High School and pursuing his M.A. at UC Berkeley.

9 The Montebello city council had finally agreed to give permission, provided that the wording on the plaque did not name the perpetrators. The wording was quietly changed in later years to read, “THIS MONUMENT ERECTED BY AMERICANS OF ARMENIAN DESCENT, IS DEDICATED TO THE 1,500,000 ARMENIAN VICTIMS OF THE GENOCIDE PERPETRATED BY THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT, 1915–1921, AND TO MEN OF ALL NATIONS WHO HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY” (note #54).

10 After Gustave von Grunebaum’s passing the center was named in his honor as the UCLA von Grunebaum Center.

But he had an unfinished project at hand. *Armenia on the Road to Independence* was only a prelude to the realization of his dream to cover in detail the two-and-a-half years of Armenian independence, to give a second life to his idolized *Hayastani Hanrapetutian* embellished with tenets and principles of Western historiography as well as extensive archival research. As he mentions it in the first volume of *The Republic of Armenia*, he already knew; he could clearly see that “the historical moment was unpropitious for enduring Armenian freedom The fact that neither Nationalist Turkey nor Soviet Russia could countenance an independent Armenia on former Ottoman and Romanov territories, that the Allied Powers and the United States failed to effectuate their plans and pledges, and that the Armenians alone were too few and too weak to defend their country led to the collapse of the Republic of Armenia.” But as a learned historian, he knew that he must “transcend sentiment in order to evaluate and set forth the complicated, often contradictory circumstances that rendered independence ephemeral.”¹¹

And the couple, Richard and Vartiter, began their search in various governmental archives and Armenian and non-Armenian repositories of documents, newspapers, letters, and reports, scanning thousands of pages of microfilm for Richard reading them with an old microfilm reader at UCLA. The collected material was overwhelming, impossible to house in one single volume as he intended, with more than 3000 type-written pages for each chapter which was eventually condensed and organized in one volume each.

The painstaking long hours of diligent work, always having Vartiter as his assistant, his copy editor and advisor, finally paid off. *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. I was published in 1971 (547pp.), covering the first year 1918-1919, followed by three reprints; *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. II, 1982 (603pp.), from Versailles to London 1919-1920, and one reprint; *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. III, 1996 (531 pp.), covering the period from London to Sèvres, February-August 1920; *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. IV, 1996 (496 pp.), subtitled, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization*. That was the end of Armenian independence, the end of the road for Richard Hovannisian, who nevertheless did not lose hope in the future of Armenia. As an epigraph to the monument he had erected, he wrote in the last page of the last volume, “... someday liberty and sovereignty will be restored, this time in a more resourceful, formidable, and fortunate Republic of Armenia.”¹²

11 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, Volume I, *The First Year 1918-1919* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971), p. xi.

12 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, Volume IV, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 408.

These four volumes were later translated into Armenian (4 volumes, 2014-2016), Russian, and Farsi.

In effect, the detailed history of the independent Republic of Armenia was published with the archives of Soviet Armenia still under lock and Soviet Armenian historiography still denouncing the 1918-1920 period, “the dashnak Armenia,” and those in the Diaspora who wrote on that subject. However, Hovannisian remembers meeting sympathetic historians during his visit to Soviet Armenia, who encouraged him in secrecy and appreciated his monumental work. He remembers Ashot Harutunyan, the director of the State Historical Archives of Armenia who took him “deep into the archives to show me all the drawers that contained numerous files that had been preserved from the first Republic, although he knew he could not make them available to me and I knew I could not ask” (note # 61).¹³ It may have been in reaction to the rigid Soviet stance and national reawakening in Soviet Armenia that in 1990 Professor Richard Hovannisian was elected to the Armenian Academy of Sciences, as the first diasporan social scientist.

Prof. Hovannisian’s next major accomplishment was the publication of two volumes of Armenian history in the English language, the entire hard work starting from the initiation of the project. I remember in my time, as a graduate student at UCLA, there were no suitable textbooks for his history courses. With the help of his family members and at his own expense, he would compile a very large file (reader) of selected chapters from different publications in the English language for each period of Armenian history—ancient, medieval, and modern—that he taught over three quarters (UCLA academic term). The selections were then copied, collated, and distributed to students on the first day of each quarter. As a fundamental solution, he invited experts of each period and each subject to contribute to the preparation of a book, comprehensible and coherent in style and continuity, following the list of materials and periodization he devised, to work as a university textbook. The two volumes were published in 1997: *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*: vol. I: *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century* (372 pp.) and *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*: vol. II: *Foreign Domination to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century* (493 pp.). The history books are widely used as textbooks in universities and for general reading and reference.

Richard Hovannisian was always deeply involved in Armenian community life. He witnessed the dwindling of Genocide survivors and their stories going down

13 In the same note, Hovannisian also attests that after the collapse of Soviet Union and opening of the archives, in his many trips to Armenia, he had had the chance to check out the pertaining files and find that although they could add to the details, however “nothing fundamental was at odds with what I had already written.”

with them. Having secured a tenure-track position in the History Department, he was able to initiate, as a first at UCLA, an oral history course in 1969 that involved first procuring a list of survivors living all over California, as thorough as possible, a huge undertaking. He taught the principles of this new discipline, the methods, the best practices, and the contribution of these testimonies to the understanding of the Genocide. and assigned students to conduct interviews.¹⁴ He insisted on beginning the interviews with questions about life before the Genocide, the customs and traditions, the feasts, the holidays, the amusements and pastimes, the day-to-day activities, the meals, the games children played, the toys they played with, the neighborhood, and more importantly, relations with Muslim neighbors. With this information he intended to build the socio-cultural history of Armenians in towns and villages in historic Armenia, where no Armenians lived anymore. But compelling the interviewees to talk about these issues was most difficult. For them, these were trivial matters they wanted to skip and jump to the main topic, their formidable experience during the massacres and deportations. The students were to record the interviews, mostly in Armenian and rarely in English, with audiotape recorder, fill out a special form about basic information on the interviewee, write a summary of the interview and submit the file to Prof. Hovannisian. Over the years more than one thousand interviews were collected.

Richard Hovannisian later undertook the project of transcribing and digitizing the audiotapes at UCLA. In 2018 he donated the entire collection to the USC Shoah Foundation and supervised the digitization and indexing of the tapes kept in Visual History Archive to be available to researchers and scholars all over the world.

Hovannisian never claimed to be a genocide scholar, but he did more than many in the field. Initiating and leading the collection of Genocide survivor testimonies is one. He organized conferences on historic cities and provinces in Western Armenia, inviting scholars from around the world to present the history of the place through time, social, cultural, economic life of Armenians, always interrupted by foreign invasions, devastations followed by reawakening, rebuilding Armenian life on the ruins, and then the final phase of the Armenian presence in these places, the Genocide. Overall, there were 18 conferences starting with Van/Vaspurakan in May 1997.¹⁵ Then followed the conferences dedicated to

¹⁴ I took that course in 1981, and it was both difficult and painful. I conducted 15 long interviews (each student was assigned 10) and lived with each one of my interviewees, day and night, sometimes seeing nightmares with me as him or her caught in the turmoil of Turkish atrocities.

¹⁵ This was the most exciting conference I ever participated. The Turkish consul general had insisted to have Turkish participation to present the Turkish point of view. It was rejected. Then he involved the FBI and demanded high security because he had decided to attend. It was ironic that all the participants and attendees had to have their bags checked and pass through metal detectors to enter

Armenian life in the same format in Baghesh/Bitlis, Taron/Mush, Tsopk/Kharpert, Karin/Erzerum, Sebastia/Sivas, Lesser Armenia, Tigranakert/Diarbekir, Edessa/Urfa, Cilicia, Pontus, The Trebizond-Black Sea Communities, Constantinople, Kars and Ani, Smyrna/Izmir, Kesaria/Kayseri and Cappadocia, Asia Minor, Northeastern Mediterranean, Musa Dagh—Dort Yol—Kessab, Persia/Iran, Jerusalem, Indian Ocean. Hovannisian collected, edited the articles, furnished proper maps and photographs, and published with his own introduction and commentary. Overall 15 volumes were published between 2000 and 2021, as follows: *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan* (2000, 308 pp.); *Armenian Baghesh/Bitlis and Taron/Mush* (2001, 235pp.); *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert* (2002, 469pp.); *Armenian Karin/Erzerum* (2003, 443pp.); *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia* (2004, 487pp.); *Armenian Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa* (2006, 586pp.); *Armenian Cilicia* (2007, 625pp.); *Armenian Pontus and the Black Sea Communities* (2009, 453pp.); *Constantinople* (2010, 494pp.); *Armenian Kars and Ani* (2011, 430pp.); *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir* (2012, 301pp.); *Armenian Kesaria/Kayseri* (2013, 308pp.); *Armenian Communities of Asia Minor* (2014, 324pp.); *Armenian Communities of the Northeastern Mediterranean: Musa Dagh-Dort Yol-Kessab* (2016, 503pp.); *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran* (2021, 649pp.).

Thanks to these conferences and ensuing publications, we have a detailed chronicle of Armenian life in historic Armenia.

The year 1993 did not go unnoticed. It was the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Independent Republic of Armenia. Two volumes of the momentous *The Republic of Armenia* were already published and well received. The conference titled “The Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920: A Seventy-Five Year Perspective” and the special issue of the *Armenian Review* housing the proceedings maintained the impact and kept the momentum going.

Conferences entertaining different aspects of the Armenian Genocide, “Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide,” proceedings published in 1998 (328pp.); “Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide,” the proceedings published in 2003, (301pp.); “The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies,” proceedings published in 2007 (450pp.); “Three Turkish Voices” (Muge Gocek, Taner Akcam, Elif Shafak); “Armenian Oral History Collections in North America,” introduced new scholarship in genocide studies and stimulated new research to expand and enrich

the auditorium. The consul general attended the conference but did not intervene. He left early and silently.

the field, like the uses of oral history testimonies for research and evidence, for the media and arts.

I had the honor and the privilege of participating in several of these conferences and my articles (expanded presentations) appeared in many of the collections mentioned above.

One significant conference, one of the first to make the Armenian Genocide a part of academic discussion and fight denialism was the 1982 international conference on the Holocaust and Genocides in Tel Aviv, organized by Israel Charny and Shalmi Davidson (details in note # 72).¹⁶ That was a turning point Hovannisian liked to speak about, a first time when the Armenian Genocide too was going to be discussed in an international academic conference besides the Holocaust. The conference was suppressed by the Israeli government, Turkish lobby, and those scholars advocating the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The “crippled conference,” as Hovannisian called it, took place with half of the original participants who resisted the suppression. Hovannisian finds it ironic that “the Armenians, the victims of genocide, had been placed in a position to ‘victimize’ the history making conference” (note # 72). Hovannisian later collected, edited, and published the papers as *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective (215 pp.)* in 1986 with 4 reprints.

Similar pressure was exerted from the same players, Turkish Embassy, Israeli authorities, and Holocaust survivors who insisted on the uniqueness of Jewish experience during the planning stage of the Holocaust Museum. The Armenian National Institute (ANI), “under the auspices of Armenian Assembly as a research, informational, and educational center,” with Richard Hovannisian as its chair and Rouben Adalian (his former student) as its director, had received promises from Michael Birnbaum, the key person in charge, that the Museum will include exhibits on the Armenian Genocide. The result was a “bitter disappointment” as the Armenian Genocide was excluded. Hovannisian finds solace in the fact that nonetheless a conference, under the auspices of ANI, was organized in 2002 in the Holocaust Museum, and the collected papers were published in 2003, titled *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (note # 86).

During his entire career, Richard Hovannisian has fought against the denial of the Armenian Genocide as a scholar, an organizer, an activist,

16 Here, Hovannisian lists the Armenian participants: Set Momjian (appointee of President Jimmy Carter to the U.S. Holocaust Council), Vigen Guroian, Vahe Oshagan, Marjorie Hovsepian Dobkin, Vahagn Dadrian, Alen Salerian, Haigaz Grigorian, Leo Hamalian, Richard Hovannisian, and Vartiter K. Hovannisian (to read Hrair Dekmejian’s paper).

always paying the price by a heartbreak, loosing cordial relations with colleagues, jeopardizing his advancement in academia, and even jeopardizing his reputation. His campaign against Stanford Shaw, UCLA professor of Turkish history who openly propagated the arguments of Turkish denialism of Armenian Genocide is just an example as are the years of continuous crusade against major denialists, Heath Lowry, Justin McCarthy, Bernard Lewis, and the like that were very active in the denialist camp in the U.S.¹⁷

In 1976-1977 Shaw published two volumes titled, *History of Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. The falsehood in presenting facts and outright denying the Genocide caused a great stir among Armenian students at UCLA. Hovannisian responded by rebutting Shaw's arguments point by point, writing letters to the press, and giving speeches at students-organized public rallies. Hiding behind the idea of academic freedom, Stanford Shaw (born Stanley Shapiro) accused Hovannisian and the Armenian "terrorists" of harassing him, and unfortunately the university politics was on his side. Together with his Turkish wife, he continued his inflammatory campaign casting a shadow on Hovannisian's reputation in the Near Eastern Center, hindering his elevation to the rank of director of the Center, although he did most of the day-to-day work of the center as the Associate Director (1978-1995), with the directors absent most of the time (note # 69).

The Turkish Government's active interference in academia, wining and dining university professors and administrators, financing and initiating the establishment of endowed Chairs of Ottoman and Turkish history in prestigious universities went smoothly in Georgetown, Princeton, Harvard, and Portland State. But at UCLA? In October 1997 Richard Hovannisian, who had already stepped down from his position as the Associate Director of the Near Eastern Center, found out about the secret negotiations of Irene Bierman, the new director of Art History, with the Turkish government and the imminent signing of an agreement between the Turkish government and the UCLA Foundation to establish an endowed chair in Turkish history, all expenses paid by the Turkish government. A new crusade began. Hovannisian notes that his supporters were active and vocal Armenian students at UCLA and young professors at the History Department who found it inadmissible to have a foreign government dictate the entire process from the election of the chair holder to the curriculum. His opponents and the supporters of

17 I remember meeting them and their followers at MESA (Middle Eastern Studies Association) biennial conferences in the 1980s and 1990s. We the Armenian participants would make sure to attend their panels and raise annoying questions, and they would come to our sessions, record the presentations, photograph the panelists, and make attempts at disrupting the session. The atmosphere was somewhat changed later, as I remember panels on the Armenian Genocide (not the denial of it) with Turkish scholars participating.

the Turkish Chair were the older professors under Stanford Shaw's influence and the director of the History Department, who was pushing Bierman's agenda. After long deliberations at the History Department faculty meeting, the proposal was defeated by a narrow margin (18 to 17) and the administration was asked to return the one-million-dollar check Bierman had received from the Turkish Embassy. Stanford Shaw's campaign of two decades was foiled, but Richard Hovannisian received the moniker of "Armenian ultranationalist" and "opponent of academic freedom" (note #87).

All his life, he remained a target of the deniers of the Armenian Genocide in academia and in world politics, but he stood strong and battled against denialism, the distortion of history and the pretended Turkish altruism in saving Armenians during the massacres and deportation. This latter, a new strategy in Turkish denial literature, aimed at tilting the scale of the crime through the aggrandizement of cases of Turks sheltering Armenian victims, and some Armenian intellectuals fell into that trap.¹⁸ His years of experience in genocide studies provided him with the skill to identify many shades of denialism, the subtle, the nuanced, the attempts at justification or trivialization, and not so genuine apologetic expressions. He wrote about them, he spoke, he warned.¹⁹

Richard Hovannisian's contribution to the advancement of the study of genocide has been first in the sphere of teaching the genocide as part of his course in Modern Armenian History. In that quarter, in the very popular course of History 131c, for the first time, I read and was mesmerized by the erudition of Professor Vahakn Dadrian and his chapter in our reader titled "Methodological Components of the Study of Genocide." The class was introduced to modern approaches of prominent genocide scholars, historians, and chroniclers of the 1915 Genocide, Arnold Toynbee, Henry Morgenthau, Ahmed Emin, Fridtjof Nansen, Ulrich Trumpner, William Westerman, even memoirs of Talaat Pasha. And Prof. Hovannisian led the heated discussions.

In late 1980s, together with Leo Kuper, the reputable genocide scholar, Richard Hovannisian introduced and taught the course Comparative Study of

18 See Richard G. Hovannisian, "Altruism in the Armenian Genocide of 1915," in *Embracing One Another*, ed. by Samuel and Pearl Oliner (New York: New York University Press, 1992) (23 pp.).

19 Three articles for quick reference: "Rewriting History: Beyond Revisionism in the Study of Armenian-Turkish Relations," *Ararat*, vol. 19 (Summer, 1978) (10 pp.); "Genocide and Denial: The Armenian Case," in *Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide*, ed. by Israel W. Charny (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984) (17 pp.), expanded version in Greek (Athens, 1984) (48 pp.); "Denial of the Armenian Genocide as a Prototype," in *Between Paris and Fresno: Armenian Studies in Honor of Dickran Kouymjian*, ed. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008), pp. 571-598.

Genocide in the Division of Honors at UCLA.²⁰ He taught that course until 2015, even after retiring from the History Department, then continued his lectureship on subjects related to genocide at the University of Southern California (USC) and Chapman University, as a Presidential Fellow, until 2022.

He was a teacher, par excellence, who strove to transmit knowledge of Armenian history from ancient times to the present, objectively but with a passion that rose above his lectures, electrified the students, and strengthened their sense of identity and national pride. His office hours were enchanting opportunities to discuss and receive cordial advice not only on issues related to the course, but pertaining the student’s trajectory, career, and professional life.

I was a student. I was a witness.²¹

Appointed by the governor of California in 1982, Hovannisian selflessly contributed his knowledge and experience in education to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education for twelve years.

His reputation and authority in the field of Genocide education brought him to collaborate with Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., the oldest and most prestigious organization of teaching the Holocaust. He authored the chapter on the Armenian Genocide to be included in the organization’s resource book and presented the subject in its numerous workshops and teacher-training programs throughout the U.S.

In the early 1980s, with George Deukmejian as the Governor of California, the Armenian National Committee and the Armenian Assembly were able to persuade the California Department of Education to include in the upcoming revised Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide and the History-Social Studies Framework for Public Schools in California the teaching of the Armenian Genocide as a part of World History in the context of World War I scheduled for the tenth grade. The Turkish opposition was vociferous and persisting, and the State Board of Education almost dropped the project. The Writing Committee—of which I was a member—was dissolved. But the Armenian lobby was unyielding and kept pressing the California Board of Education. To save the situation, the Board invited Professor Richard Hovannisian to write the chapter on the Armenian

20 His article, “The Armenian Genocide,” in Samuel Totten, ed., *Teaching about Genocide: Issues, Approaches and Resources* (2004) is a guide to his methods and approach in teaching the Armenian Genocide in institutions of higher education.

21 I was a graduate student in the Armenian section of the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department, but I enthusiastically enrolled in Prof. Hovannisian’s classes fitting them in my heavy schedule of courses necessary for my M.A. and Ph.D.

Genocide. The Model Curriculum was finally published in 1988. Hovannisian was also involved, always assisted by the Armenian National Committee, in the processes of including the teaching of Armenian Genocide in New York and Massachusetts' public schools' curricula.

Richard Hovannisian was a diligent worker, maintained a heavy teaching schedule and in the meantime served in high-level committees where Armenian issues were at stake. One such committee was the "American team engaging in Soviet-American Symposiums on Ethnic Processes, sponsored by the International Research and Exchange Commission (IREX)," to which he was invited in 1985 and took part in many symposiums in Moscow, Kiev, Princeton, Yerevan, and Los Angeles (note # 74).

Following the Earthquake in Armenia and during the Gharabagh (Karabagh) Movement, he was a sought for speaker in the U.S. and abroad, and his articles appeared worldwide to provide historical background and explanation about what was occurring.²²

Richard had long ago sensed the not so friendly atmosphere in the History Department and the vulnerability of the Armenian section. To this end, he strove to secure endowment for the Armenian Chair to save it from the whim of the administrators. Today, we owe the perpetuity of the Armenian History Chair at UCLA to his vision, his skills in organizing, motivating, and fundraising. The necessary amount of \$500,000 was secured; the reluctant UCLA leadership was won over, and finally, in 1986 the endowed Chair, named Armenian Educational Foundation (AEF) Chair of Modern Armenian History, was established (details in note # 81). In 2011, after several decades teaching in the History Department, he decided to step down but made sure that his replacement, instead of a temporary lecturer, as the dean had suggested attempting to brush off the initial agreement, will be hired as a full-time tenure-track professor (note # 93). The Chair was later renamed Richard Hovannisian Chair of Modern Armenian History.

In my academic life I have encountered fine scholars, experts in their specific field of studies who always kept a distance from the community, uninterested in community affairs and the problems it faced. They lived in their ivory tower, as the metaphor goes. Hovannisian was the opposite. He was a scholar quintessential but also a true activist dedicating his precious time to the betterment of Armenian life in America, fighting against ethnic discrimination, testifying in

²² He has discussed the Karabagh conflict extensively in his volumes of *The Republic of Armenia*, but here are two articles for the sake of quick reference: "The Armeno-Azerbaijani Conflict over Mountainous Karabagh," *Armenian Review*, vol. 34:2 (Summer, 1971) (36 pp.); "Mountainous Karabagh in 1920: An Unresolved Contest," *Armenian Review*, vol. 46 (1993 [1996]) (36 pp.).

U.S. and international courts (such as the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples in the Senate Chamber in Paris, 1984), governmental platforms, and media in defense of generations of Genocide survivors some of whom took justice in their hands and acted in a way unacceptable for the “civilized” society today. About one instance of this kind he writes, “My ‘professional’ testimony focused the trauma and frustration of denial of the Armenian Genocide, while cleverly blocking the attempts of the federal prosecutor to make me admit that as a professor and community leader I could have counseled against violent actions” (note # 79).

Richard Hovannisian was an achiever, but not an ivory tower dweller. He demanded, he assisted, he guided, he supported his students, his children, and anyone who needed his help. He took pride of their accomplishments, but it pained him deeply when they disparaged him. One of such cases was that of a former student. He sometimes remembered it with fatherly sorrow; he even mentioned it in one of the notes. But these cases were few and his proud moments were abundant. He felt “being rewarded for years thereafter when former students voluntarily would attest to the influence that I and my courses had in their lives” (note # 57).

Beka Kobakhidze, a Georgian historian, was not one of Richard’s students, but his life was touched by him.²³ They met in 2013 during a one-week seminar dedicated to “The First Republic of Georgia,” held at the National Archives of Georgia.” Kobakhidze and his friends, young and unknown at the time, had been able to invite well known speakers and Richard Hovannisian was the main one. “We became friends and after that he stood by my side like a grandfather to a grandson.” Five years later, Kobakhidze invited him again, this time on the occasion of the centennial of the Caucasian republics. The inaugural event was a discussion between Richard Hovannisian and Stephen Jones (Director of Georgian Program at Harvard) held at Ilia State University and moderated by Kobakhidze himself. That was followed by a conference on the three republics with the participation of historians from the three republics. According to Kobakhidze, the proceedings were collected and published with Richard’s foreword titled “Unfinished Symphony.” Kobakhidze considers Hovannisian among the very few major scholars of the South Caucasus republics. “He wrote with a broad regional and transnational context. Therefore, he wrote about the foreign policy of the first Republic of Georgia much more than Georgian historians had done until very recently²⁴.... Yes, we the Georgian historians have to travel Richard’s way. We are

23 Excerpts that follow in quotation marks are taken from an article titled “Remembering Prof. Richard Hovannisian,” by Beka Kobakhidze, published in HAYTERT 2023-07-19.

24 In all 4 volumes of *The Republic of Armenia* and the volume before them Hovannisian treats the Caucasus with a broad spectrum when it comes to foreign interventions, Georgian, Armenian, and

decades late, but we need a similar school of historiography which Richard founded for Armenians.”

Among the moments of pride and exhilaration highlighted in Hovannisian’s notes is when his oldest son, Raffi, as the foreign minister of the Republic of Armenia officiated the raising of the tricolor in New York marking Armenia’s membership to the U.N. “It was exhilarating to be in New York City on March 2, 1992 (our wedding anniversary), when Armenia was admitted to the United Nations and Raffi addressed the General Assembly and then raised the tricolor flag on the U.N Plaza. My college-days fantasy had been realized through my son” (note # 84).

After years of writing and speaking about the genocide of Armenians, the concentration camps, and deportation routes, in 1998 he physically stood witness to the horror during his visit to Deir-ez-Zor from Aleppo, “a highly emotional pilgrimage” where he experienced the bleak and somber atmosphere, by his own hands scraped the surface of the dry desert soil and uncovered human bones. “I took several bones as a remembrance, but then had pangs of conscience and returned them to the soil, as I did not want to separate them from their loved ones or companions.” That one experience, he attests, “made indelible impression on me” (note # 89). Then in 2005 a first visit to Western Armenia with Vartiter and Turkish scholar Muge Gocek. Among many towns and villages, they visited Kaspar’s Pasmashen, Siroon’s Keserig, Hovakim Kotcholoizian’s Tsitogh. A second visit to Western Armenia, with the NAASR (National Association for Armenian Studies and Research) group and his daughter Ani, took him to a full circle to complete the tour of erstwhile Armenian towns and villages and the killing fields of the desert, familiar names of concentration camps and deportation routes he had written and spoken about (note # 94).

An Epilogue

Connecting one more time, here in the finale of this short exposé, to the transgenerational impact of the Genocide, as expounded in the above-mentioned monograph I authored, I’d like to reiterate that Richard Hovannisian as a second-

Tatar (later labeled as Azeri) inter-racial and boundary issues, and foreign policies of the three. The following references are to two of his short articles for quick reading:

1. "Armenian and the Caucasus in the Genesis of the Soviet-Turkish Entente," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 4 (April 1973) (19 pp.),
2. "Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet Rule," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, ed. by R.G. Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Slavic Studies, 1983) (33 pp.), also published as "Arménie: l'intermede de l'indépendance nationale," *Esprit*, (April, 1984) (23 pp.).

generation survivor had felt on his own skin how painful it is to be the child of a survivor of a great catastrophe. He had suffered and he knew very well that the suffering would not end with the next generation.²⁵ Realization of the true meaning of difficulties with survivor parents—emotional impediments of resentment, alienation, and distancing—and the opportunity and the readiness for self-analysis for direct confrontation with the problem, came to different children at different times, lasting much longer for some, affecting their character, their behavior, and even their future career. Richard Hovannisian was able to find the equilibrium he needed to comfortably navigate his way through a stormy adolescence to a successful life and career. His inherited memory guided him to dedicate his life and career to building a monument of remembrance through his academic endeavors, as well as his activism for international recognition of the Genocide.

He was an esteemed, reputable, and world-renowned scholar awarded with numerous honors, encyclicals, medals, honorary doctorates, state and federal commendations, impossible to name them all in this article.²⁶ I wish I could at least enumerate here all his 41 books and 76 articles published in scholarly journals. I wish I could talk about all the Armenian Chairs or programs in colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and scholarly organizations in whose establishment and leadership he participated with such enthusiasm and efficacy and all the committees and clubs advancing Armenia culture or political goals in which he assumed the role of an advisor. Without those would I do justice to his legacy?

To become what he was took more than his self-discipline, objectivity, and meticulous and selective treatment of the sources. It took more than knowledge he accumulated through relentless research, intense labor, and perseverance. Perhaps it was a hidden motivation deep in his sub-conscious, that revealed itself just once in his youth as a fantasy to represent Armenia in the United Nations, during a visit to New York as a young AYP-er, turning into an aspiration, a genuine and undying urge to serve the homeland of his dream.

25 Announcing the birth of his first son, Raffi, to Simon Vratsian, he wrote, “Raffi is growing.... He is laughing. He does not know what the future has in store for him. He does not yet know that he has been born into a race in which all children, if they are good, must suffer.” See, Garin K. Hovannisian, *Family of Shadows*, p. 84.

26 All the awards and honors he received are listed in Appendix V of the “RGH—*ABRIDGED NOTES*.” I tried to count them, well over 60 and among them the Guggenheim fellowship, UCLA Humanities and Metropolitan Museum of Art Awards, medals from the Catholicos of All Armenians and the Catholicos of the Great house of Cilicia, Lifetime Achievement and Legacy Awards from Armenian and non-Armenian organizations. And I know that Vartiter was the custodian of all his memorabilia, meticulously collecting and guarding these “trophies,” recording his talks, making scrapbooks. Perhaps one day Richard Hovannisian will be rewarded by a deserving nook in a museum or a museum of his own in Armenia as a physical display of his legacy.

Ամփոփում

ՌԻՉԸՐԴ ՅՈՎՀԱՆՆԻՍԵԱՆ
(ՆՈՅՆՄԲԵՐ 9, 1932 – ՅՈՒԼԻՍ 9, 2023)

Յարգանքի տուրք եւ փորձ՝ ուրուագրելու նրա կեանքն ու գործը

Ռուբինա Բ. Փիրումեան
(Լու Անջելես)
Դոկտոր

Բանալի բառեր – Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, ակադեմական–հասարակական եւ քաղաքական գործունեություն, պատմագիտություն, գիտաժողով, Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն, ցեղասպանագիտություն, բանատուր պատմություն, թուրքական քարոզարշաւ, ուրացում:

Մահը անսպասելի էր եւ առիթ՝ գովեստի ու ակնասանքի խօսքերի յորձանուտի, որ ողողեց համացանցը: Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանը արժանի էր այդ անկեղծ դրուատանքին եւ աւելին: Այս յօդուածի նեղ սահմաններում փորձ է արւում վեր հանելու նրա բեղմնաւոր գործունեութեան անպարագրելի արգասիքը ակադեմական կեանքում եւ հասարակական, քաղաքական ասպարէզներում:

Ռիչըրդը ծնուել ու հասակ էր նետել Կալիֆորնիայի Թիւլէյր քաղաքում եւ դաստիարակուել ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրած հօր խստաբարոյ շնչի տակ: Ռիչըրդի հակազդեցութիւնը այդ մթնոլորտին օտարացումից մինչեւ վերադարձ հայկականութեան, մինչեւ ապագայի իր ընտրած ճամբան բացատրւում է ցեղասպանութեան թողած եւ սերնդէ սերունդ փոխանցուած ազդեցութեամբ: Անժխտելի է նաեւ ազդեցութիւնը նրա ապագայ կնոջ՝ Վարդիթերի եւ Բէյրութի Նշան Փալանձեան ճեմարանի ժամանակի տեսուչ եւ անկախ Հայաստանի Հանրապետութեան վերջին վարչապետ Սիմոն Վրացեանի, որ նրան մղեց մէկ տարի անցկացնելու ճեմարանում, հայերէն սովորելու եւ յազուրթ տալու Վրացեանի «Հայաստանի Հանրապետութիւն» աշխատութիւնը կարդալու իր տենչին: Դա պիտի գծէր նրա կեանքի ճամբան. նախ՝ տիրապետելու պատմագիտութեան

արեւմտեան մեթոդաբանութեանն ու սկզբունքներին, յետոյ՝ գործունէութեան ծաւալում, ստեղծագործութիւն:

«*Armenia on the Road to Independence*» (Հայաստանը անկախութեան ճանապարհին)՝ հրատարակուած 1967 թ., իր դոքտորական աւարտաձառն էր, որին զանազան երկրների արխիւներում երկարամեայ փնտռութից ու տքնաջան աշխատանքից յետոյ հետեւեցին չորս հատորները (1971-1996)՝ «*The Republic of Armenia*» (Հայաստանի Հանրապետութիւն)՝ 2177 ընդհանուր էջաքանակով, թարգմանուած հայերէնի, ռուսերէնի եւ պարսկերէնի ամբողջութեամբ կամ մասամբ:

Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանի մուտքը ակադեմական ասպարէզ տեղի ունեցաւ 1960 թ., երբ հրաւիրուեց պատմութիւն դասախօսելու Քալիֆորնիայի համալսարանում (UCLA): Ու սկսեց նրա վերելքը մինչեւ փռոֆեսորի աստիճան եւ UCLA-ի մերձատրարելեան կենտրոնի փոխտնօրէն: Լայնածաւալ է նրա ակադեմական գործունէութիւնը: Հայոց պատմութեան դասախօս էր՝ սիրուած, բայց խստապահանջ, որ առիւնում էր, հպարտութիւն ներշնչում եւ ազգային ինքնութիւն ամրապնդում: Անգլերէն դասագրքի բացակայութիւնը մղեց նրան կազմակերպելու, նախագծելու եւ հրաւիրելու իւրաքանչիւր շրջանի մասնագէտին՝ կազմելու «*The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*» (Հայ ժողովրդի պատմութիւն. հին ժամանակներից մինչեւ մեր օրերը) երկհատորեակը, որ լոյս տեսաւ 1997 թ.:

Իր հեռատեսութեանն ու նուիրումին ենք պարտական հայոց բանաւոր պատմութեան դասընթացների՝ համալսարանում հաստատման եւ ուսանողների միջոցով Հայոց ցեղասպանութիւնը վերապրածների հազարից աւելի հարցազրոյցների կազմակերպման համար: Դրանք այսօր Հարաւային Քալիֆորնիայի համալսարանի (USC) «Shoah Foundation»-ի արխիւներում են՝ իր իսկ հսկողութեամբ դասակարգուած, ինդէքսաւորուած եւ հասանելի ամբողջ աշխարհում:

Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանը կարողացաւ համալսարանի իր դիրքն ու հեղինակութիւնը ի սպաս դնել, համալսարանի հովանաւորութեամբ եւ նիւթական յատկացումով գիտաժողովներ կազմակերպել, իւրաքանչիւրը՝ Արեւմտեան Հայաստանի քաղաքներից ու նահանգներից կամ Օսմանեան կայսրութեան հայաշատ վայրերից մէկին նուիրուած: Ապա այդ 15 գիտաժողովների զեկոյցները տքնաջան աշխատանքով հաւաքեց, խմբագրեց եւ հրատարակեց՝ այդպիսով

յաւիտենականացնելով հայ ժողովրդի ընկերային, քաղաքական ու մշակութային կեանքը իր հայրենիքում, որտեղ այսօր հայ չի ապրում:

Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանը իրեն ցեղասպանագէտ չէր համարում, բայց արեց ատելին՝ ոչ միայն բանաւոր պատմութեան իր նախաձեռնութեամբ, այլ նաեւ Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան թեմայով իր յօդուածներով, կազմակերպած գիտաժողովներով եւ հրատարակած նիւթերով: Նրա կեանքը դարձաւ շարունակական պայքար թուրքական եւ թուրքի քարոզչական մեքենային լծուած «պատմաբաններին» ուրացման դէմ: Նոյնիսկ կարողացաւ ձախողեցնել թուրք կառավարութեան նիւթական միջոցներով գրեթէ՝ իրականութիւն դարձած թուրքական ամբիոնի հաստատումը UCLA-ում: Իսկ ինքը միշտ մնաց ուրացողների թշնամանքի ու հերիւրանքի թիրախ:

Ռիչըրդ Յովհաննիսեանը երբեք չկտրուեց համայնքի կեանքից, դժուարութիւններից ու նրա տարած պայքարից ընդդէմ ամերիկեան հասարակական կեանքում երբեմն բացայայտուող բացասական երեւոյթների: Օրինակ՝ առաջին անգամ ԱՄՆ-ում Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան յուշարձանի կանգնեցման ընթացքում՝ դեռ 1960-ականներին, ամերիկեան եւ միջազգային դատարաններում եւ լրատուամիջոցներում ի շահ Հայ Դատի պայքարի ու Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան համաշխարհային ճանաչման իր տուած վկայութիւններով, ԱՄՆ-ի պետական դպրոցներում Հայոց ցեղասպանութեան դասաւանդման օգտին, ընդդէմ թուրքական քարոզարշաւին իր նշանակալից մասնակցութեամբ... եւ ցանկը երկար է:

Կարելի չէ մէկ յօդուածում համապարփակ քննարկել նրա բազմաթիւ հրատարակութիւնները՝ մենագրութիւններ, հաւաքածոներ, յօդուածներ գիտական պարբերականներում, գլուխներ գիտական հրատարակութիւններում, կամ յիշել նրա ստացած բոլոր գնահատագիրները, շքանշաններն ու պարգեւները կամ այն ազդեցութիւնը, որ ունեցաւ սփիւռքահայ սերունդների ազգային դաստիարակութեան գործում: Այդ ամենը իր կեանքն էր, իր էութիւնը, իսկ նպատակը՝ ծառայել իր յաւերժ երազած հայրենիքին, որի վերելքով հպարտացաւ ու ցաւերով տառապեց:

РИЧАРД ОВАННИСЯН (9 НОЯБРЯ 1932 г. - 9 ИЮЛЯ 2023 Г.)

Дань уважения и попытка краткого очерка его жизни и творчества

Рубина Б. Пирумян

(Лос-Анджелес)

Доктор

Ключевые слова - Геноцид армян, научно-общественная и политическая деятельность, историография, конференция, Республика Армения, геноцидоведение, устная история, турецкая пропагандистская кампания, отрицание.

Смерть была неожиданной и вызвала поток слов похвалы и сожаления, захлестнувший Интернет. Ричард Ованнисян заслужил эту искреннюю похвалу и даже больше. Принимая во внимание ограниченный объем данной статьи, нами предпринята попытка осветить необъятные плоды его плодотворной деятельности в академической жизни, на общественной и политической арене.

Ричард родился и вырос в городе Тулейр (Tulare), штат Калифорния, под строгим надзором своего отца, пережившего геноцид. Противодействие Ричарда этой атмосфере, его отчуждение и возвращение к армянскому, к избранному им пути в будущем, объясняется влиянием, оставленным геноцидом и передавшимся из поколения в поколение. Неоспоримо влияние его будущей жены Вардитер, а также Симона Врацяна, временного руководителя бейрутской семинарии Ншан Паланчян и последнего премьер-министра независимой Республики Армения, который подтолкнул его провести год в семинарии, чтобы выучить армянский язык и прочитать труд Врацяна «Республика Армения». Всё это должно было обозначить дальнейший путь его жизни: сначала освоение западной методологии и принципов историографии, затем развертывание его деятельности и творчества.

Труд «**Armenia on the Road to Independence**» («Армения на пути к независимости»), опубликованный в 1967 г., стал его докторской диссертацией, за которой после долгих исследований и упорной работы в архивах разных стран последовали четыре тома (1971-1996) его труда «**The**

Republic of Armenia» («Республика Армения»), общим объемом 2177 страниц, переведенного на армянский, русский и персидский языки полностью или частично.

Ричард Ованнисян вышел на академическую арену в 1960 г., когда его пригласили читать лекции по истории в Калифорнийском университете (UCLA). И началось его восхождение до звания профессора и заместителя директора Ближневосточного центра Калифорнийского университета в Лос-Анджелесе. Его научная деятельность обширна. Он был преподавателем истории Армении, популярным, но строгим, который внушал гордость и укреплял национальную идентичность. Отсутствие учебника на английском побудило его организовать, планировать и пригласить специалистов по каждому периоду для составления книги **«The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times»** («Армянский народ с древнейших времен до наших дней») (в 2-х томах), вышедшей в свет в 1997 г.

В связи с учреждением в университете курсов устной истории Армении и организацией интервью с более тысячей армян, переживших Геноцид, мы обязаны его дальновидности и самоотверженности. В этом ему оказали помощь также студенты. Сегодня эти рассекреченные, проиндексированные под его наблюдением и доступные по всему миру материалы находятся в архивах «Фонда Шоа» при университете Южной Калифорнии (USC).

Ричард Ованнисян смог поставить свое положение и авторитет на службу университету, под патронажем и финансовыми средствами университета организовать конференции, каждая из которых была посвящена одному из городов и губерний Западной Армении или армянонаселенным местам Османской империи. Затем он кропотливо собрал, отредактировал и опубликовал отчеты этих 15 конференций, увековечив тем самым общественную, политическую и культурную жизнь армянского народа на своей исторической родине, где сегодня больше нет армян.

Ричард Ованнисян не считал себя исследователем Геноцида армян, но он сделал больше, не только благодаря своей инициативе по устной истории, но и своими статьями, организацией конференций и публикацией статей о Геноциде армян. Его жизнь превратилась в непрерывную борьбу против «запряженных» турецкой пропагандистской машиной турецких и иностранных «историков» - отрицателей. Ему даже удалось помешать созданию турецкой кафедры в Калифорнийском университете UCLA в Лос-Анджелесе, что почти стала реальностью при финансовой поддержке турецкого правительства. И он всегда оставался объектом враждебности и клеветы лиц, отрицающих Геноцид армян.

Ричард Ованнисян никогда не отрывался от жизни общества, его трудностей и повсеместной борьбы с негативными явлениями, которые иногда возникали в американской общественной жизни. Например, при возведении памятника Геноциду армян в США, еще в 1960-х годах, он своими показаниями в американских и международных судах и в средствах массовой информации в пользу решения Армянского вопроса и мирового признания Геноцида армян, преподавания Геноцида армян в государственных школах США, значительным участием в борьбе против турецкой пропаганды ... и этот список можно продолжать бесконечно.

В рамках одной статьи невозможно всесторонне анализировать его многочисленные публикации: монографии, сборники, статьи в научной периодике, главы в научных изданиях, вспомнить все полученные награды, медали, или то влияние, которое он оказывал на поколения армянской диаспоры в деле национально ориентированного образования. Все это было его жизнью, его сущностью, и его целью было служение своей вечно мечтаемой Родине, возвышением которой он гордился и от болей которой страдал.