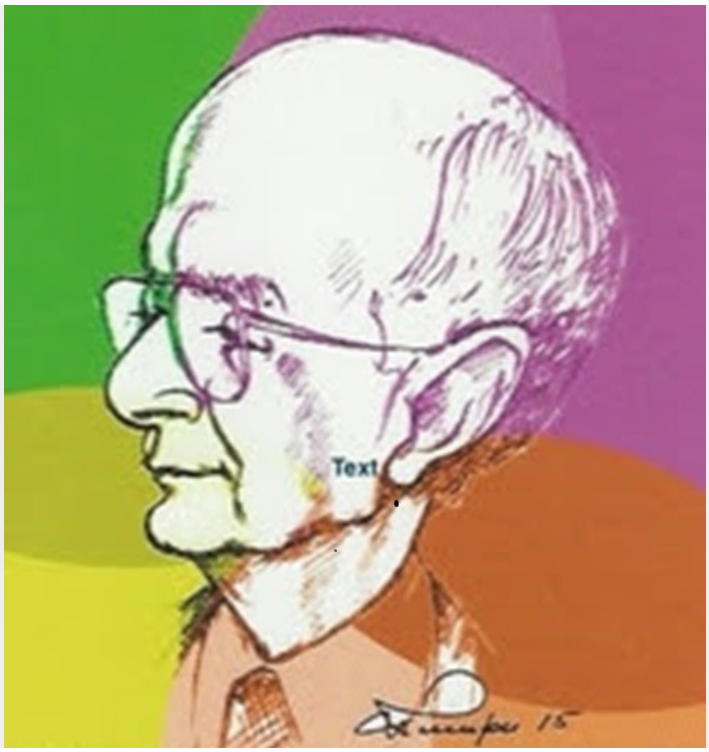
LEST WE FORGET

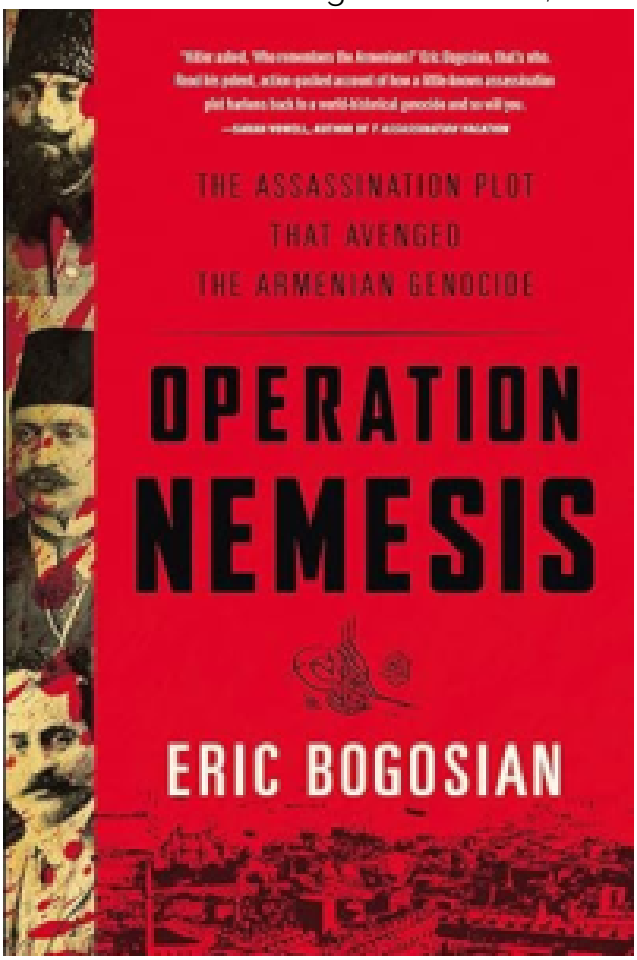
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Category: Opinions

Vahe H. Apelian, Loveland OH, 24 October 2015

Eric Boghossian ends his Operation Nemesis stating that the story that fired his imagination and took seven years of his life to research and narrate was his grandfather's gift to him. In an introspective mood he notes, "We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing. We all know, either implicitly or explicitly, that all we really have is our place in the memories of others. We exist to the degree that we know and remember one another; even the most isolated among us. We share a collective understanding that we are all part of a greater whole".



I was reminded of the above words while reading Dr. Zaven Messerlian's latest book Excerpts Salvaged From the Press (**Մամուլէն Փրկուած Էջեր**). The 390-age book is a selection from the many pieces Messerlian had written (1963 to 2010) about Armenian issues, mostly in the Lebanese-Armenian press. Meticulous record keeping is his hallmark.

In addition to the perennial and vital topics such as the Genocide, the "Armenian Question", Diaspora schools, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the bilingual (Armenian and English) book contains the eulogies of the late Catholicos of All Armenians of Blessed Vazken I, the acclaimed benefactor Alex Manougian along with many leading Lebanese-Armenians. The eulogies are replete with biographical information about Armenian personalities including the author's experiences with them. The accounts provide vital information for the history of the Diaspora and its survival under

difficult conditions--thanks to the selfless efforts of these dedicated people.

Among the eulogies are those of Rev. Dikran Kherlopian (1891 -1968, educator); Megerdich Messerlian (his father, 1898-1979, a community leader, activist, philanthropist and a noted Lebanese Armenian trader); Kersam Aharonian (1916-1981, educator, author and a long-time editor of the 'Zartonk' daily); Maitre Khosrof Tutunjian (1894-1982, community political leader, editor, author); Feridé Salibian (1922-1989, educator); Goruyn Keshishian (1914-1990, the longtime director of the Gulbenkian Foundation Armenian Department); Khacher Kaloustian (1915-1985, educator); Papken Megerdichian, MD (1911-1985, surgeon and director of the Lebanese Armenian Sanatorium, community advocate); Asbed Donabedian (1923-1993, educator, noted Armenian numismatist who had amassed the largest private collection of ancient Armenian coins); Ardashes Khachadourian (1931-1993, educator, Armenian linguist, author who had amassed the largest private collection of representative Armenian journals, periodicals); Hovsep Yenikomishian MD (1895-1994, noted physician, Armenian community advocate); Prof. Levon Babigian (1917-1996, at the American University of Beirut, scientist and Armenian community advocate); Levon Vartan (1925-1997, educator, author, editor); Esther Shirejian (1908-1999, veteran educator, librarian); Dr. Houseg Donabedian (1916-2003, pharmacist, lecturer, community leader); Antranig Manougian MD (1910-2008, psychiatrist, longtime director of the Lebanese national psychiatric hospital, member of the Lebanese Parliament); Vazken Tutunjian (1915-2006, educator, author, miniaturist).



It's the eulogies that reminded me of the Bogosian quote. In final analysis the existence of these dedicated individuals is affirmed only as long as the succeeding generations remember them and appreciate their contributions that helped the post-Genocide Armenian Diaspora rise from the ashes.

Dr. Zaven Messerlian has authored 10 books, three of which are in English and the others in Armenian. The first book, published in 1955, was a 14-page booklet in English. It was translated to

French, Arabic and Serbian. His last book is in English as well and is titled Armenian Participation to the Lebanese Legislative Elections 1934-2009. Excerpts Salvaged From the Press (2013) is his ninth book. The number of the pages in these ten books adds to impressive 2634 pages in total.

Messerlian's contribution to Armenian literature and journalism becomes more impressive when we bear in mind that he is not a professional writer or a columnist. He is an educator who has been the principal of the Armenian Evangelical College since 1967. Nowadays the school is named after its benefactors Yeprem and Martha Philibosian. He started his teaching career at the same school in 1960 when he was still a graduate student in history at the American University of Beirut. He was not yet thirty when he was entrusted with the mantle of the school's leadership. He remains steadfast on his calling to educate succeeding generations through the heyday of the school when it boasted almost 800 students in 1974-1975--the year that marked the start of the Lebanese Civil War.

The publication of the book has been made possible by the foundation set up by Mimi and Armen Haroutunian to cover the printing expenses of Armenian books. So far the foundation has made possible the publication of 40 books. Dr. Zaven Messerlian may be contacted at P.O.Box 11-129, Beirut, Lebanon or through the school's email (A_E_C@cyberia.net.lb).