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Vartan Gregorian has passed away

30.04.2021

[Vladimir Orlov](#)

Vartan Gregorian is no longer with us. He passed away at the age of 88, a Keeper of the Library; the man who once saved the sixth largest collection of books in the world – the New York Public Library, now a vibrant intellectual beehive; Vartan managed to convince the Manhattan's moneybags that philanthropy can be both "honorable and glamorous," in his words.

The Intellectual has left – and how America now lacks intellectuals! The Internationalist left... no matter how strange this word sounds today: Vartan was a true internationalist, which, I think, was helped by his education as a historian; he did not seek conflicts; he did not seek to "take sides"; but he did not go aside either; he strove to resolve conflicts and bring peace closer; for everyone, not for the chosen one.

A Sensitive Person has left: subtle, modest, insightful. And an encyclopedic scholar, fluent in seven languages. Vartan was born into a simple family in Tabriz, Iran. He was brought up on his grandmother's fairy tales. He spoke Armenian at home and learned Russian at school. When he ventured to apply to Stanford, he barely spoke English... But the desire for Knowledge, for the preservation of this Knowledge, made Dr. Gregorian one of the outstanding enlighteners of our time. Having taught himself and charmed the pampered Manhattan nobility, now he himself taught the art of charity to Bill Gates, and many other powerful people of this world. Gentle, good-natured in communication, even as if shy, such as intellectuals-book readers are; and flint, when it came to principles.

One of his principles was respect for Russia – its culture, its contemporary choices, its unique geopolitical place on the world map. For the Enlightener, the witch-hunt looked like the dark Middle Ages; his choice was cooperation, dialogue, faith in the healthy intuition of young people; in all this, Vartan in recent years was in his "new homeland", in America, in the minority. But wisdom is alien to vanity and opportunism. He was not afraid of being in the minority. And he was not afraid to stand up for his principles. Not only the Enlightener was gone; the Strategist was gone. A sinkhole has formed in downtown Manhattan. Vacuum without Vartan. A breach. Humanists, Enlighteners, Library Keepers – there are so many of them only in fairy tales; and how few of them there are in our real life...

Comments

No comments

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