

ՄԱՀԱՆՈՍԱԿԱՆ

NECROLOGY



PETER HALFTER

(1944–2018)

The Armenian and medieval studies of Germany suffered a great loss. The scientist, the family man, and the eminent citizen passed away at the age of 74. His life is a vivid illustration of Armenian-German friendship.

Peter Halfter was born in 1944 in the city of Brownov (formerly Branau) in Bohemia, presently part of the Czech Republic. In 1946 at the end of World War II when the father of the family was still in captivity, Peter Halfter, his mother and grandmother found shelter in Germany.

In 1949 when the father of the family, freed from captivity, returned, their family settled in Grenzach-Wyhlen in the province of Baden-Wuthemberg in Freiburg. The father joined the post-war activities of the recovery of Germany and, being a chemist, made his own contribution to the process. Peter Halfter's younger brothers and sister were born in Grenzach-Wyhlen. I remember that on his last visit to Armenia he asked me to join him in his walk along the tunnel connecting Yerevan to the gorge of the Zangu. In this walk, he wanted to visualize how the German prisoners painstakingly worked to help the workers engaged in the construction of Yerevan for the common good of all Armenians. Peter Halfter's wife, Hanna whose father had also been a prisoner of war was also walking with us. The bridge of Victory over the Zangu, the weir on the road leading up to the district of Monument were sources of memories for them as those were also built by the German prisoners of World War II. They were praying for these constructions, created by their compatriots, to remain as symbols of German-Armenian friendship in the memory of our nation.

While studying at Rheinfelden gymnasium in Grenzach, at the library of the gymnasium, Peter had been attracted by different research works on the Armenian architecture. In 1966, acquiring profound knowledge in the spheres of German studies and history at the Universities of Basel and Tübingen, and taking the state examination in grammar, that was part of the centralized education system of the Federal Republic of Germany, Peter Halfter became a researcher at the centre of *Regesta Imperii* that specialized in the Middle Age studies. Afterward a journey to Turkey became a turning point in his biography. During this journey, he visited Eastern Anatolia and Cilicia. From 1975 to 1976, while studying in Nellingen and Swabia he met Hanna, then returned to Tübingen and proceeded with his work at *Regesta Imperii*. In 1978, he got his first permanent position at the gymnasium of Morike in Ludwigsburg. The position provided him with financial stability, and in 1980, he married Hanna at the Catholic church of Alexander in Marbach. From the happy marriage their children Michael (1983) and Dorothea (1985) were born. In 1986, Peter Halfter continued his pedagogic and scientific activities. His scientific research enabled him to defend a thesis, and in 1993, Peter Halfter was conferred with doctor's degree (PhD) at the University of Tübingen. In 1995, he published the edited version of his dissertation "The Papacy and Armenians in the Early and Late Middle Ages" that drew great interest in the academic world.

For about thirty years, he had been a researcher at "Peeters" International Institution, contributing to the studies that cover such issues as Medieval Europe, the Middle Eastern Crusades, the history of the Christian nations in the Caucasus. He published his articles in such journals as "Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum", "Oriens Christianus", "Le Museon" and various specialized anthologies, containing publications on conferences or articles dedicated to different researchers of the field. As a researcher in the medieval studies, he indeed mastered the interpretation of Latin sources and had perfect understanding of the historical and cultural specifics of medieval Europe and the Middle East. Using his background knowledge and studying these issues from the perspective of his scientific interests, he succeeded in creating the overall portrait of the Middle Eastern Crusades as well as the Caucasus. Not having basic education in the Armenian studies, he however managed to penetrate into the data represented in the Armenian sources, the understanding of which causes difficulties even for

many Armenologists. His knowledge in the Armenian architecture facilitated his task of penetrating into the Catholic church of Burgos where he became involved in the studies of evidence and relics (initially preserved in Koln, in 1204) concerning Simon the Cananaean (Simon the Zealot). In these studies, using Latin sources and archaeological data he was able to elucidate diverse issues on the history of Armenia and Georgia in the era of developed feudalism. Within the frames of his research, he covered the nature of relationships between Friedrich II and the House of Staufer, the ties between the Emperor Otto IV and a number of Roman Popes (Ghukas III, Innocent III), the existing relationships between different Catholicoses of all Armenians (Nerses IV the Gracious, Grigor IV Tegha, Konstantin Bardzraberdtsi and others) and the kings of Cilician Armenia (Leo I, Hethum I and others). Later on, Peter Halfter's studies were aimed at revealing the specifics of relationships between the Georgian kingdom and the Roman Papacy as well as the Georgian kings' ties with such Catholic orders as the Templars and the order of Hospitallers in the 13th century. Among his scientific interests were the services of the Armenian and Georgian military men under the Mongolian rule, their participation in the Mongolian military campaigns in the Middle East, as well as the political, religious relationships of the Middle Eastern Christian nations with Medieval Europe. Peter Halfter's studies also focused on the common historic-epic legends of Medieval Armenia and Europe.

He was one of the masters of the Armenian studies who had dedicated his entire life to the investigation of the deep cultural, spiritual relationships between the Roman Papacy and Cilician Armenia. Within the frames of his studies, Peter Halfter also dwelt upon the relationships between the Crusade countries and the Christian nations of the Caucasus. His scientific interests covered such topics as German Empire (12th–15th centuries), the Roman Papacy, the Crusade countries of the Middle East, Cilician Armenia, Georgia, the medieval culture, the multi-layered society of the Middle East.

We were acquainted in Paris and had various meetings there and in Frankfurt. Later, beginning from 1998 he visited Armenia and Echmiadzin several times (2014, 2015), participated in conferences held both in Armenia and Georgia. Simultaneously, within the frames of Armenian-German collaboration, he actively took part in the process of publishing and editing the journal "Deutsch-Armenische Korrespondenz". From 2000 up to 2008, he carried out pedagogic

activities at Friedrich Schiller gymnasium in Marbach. Paying tribute to his religious beliefs and visions, in the autumn of 2017, Peter Halfter organized pilgrimages to the Catholic churches of France and Great Britain, in which the parishioners of Alexander Catholic Church in Marbach participated. Peter Halfter also delivered lectures on the topics that were included in the scope of his scientific interests.

His first significant step in the Armenian studies was the monograph “The Papacy and Armenians in the Early and Late Middle Ages.” The monograph received great acclaim in both Armenian and international academic spheres. The official journal of Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin dedicated several pages to the review of the given work (see 1996, 12, pp. 116–128). His works in the field presented the Armenian studies in a new light, enriching it with new interpretations and solutions. Peter Halfter carried out a comprehensive study on the policy of the Roman church. Based on the nature of the Roman church’s policy, he dwelt upon the religious, political relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Thanks to the in-depth analysis of the available materials, Peter Halfter concluded that the amelioration of the relationships of the Roman Church with the Armenian Apostolic Church directly depended on the deterioration of the ties between the Armenian and Byzantine Churches. The given fact supports the view that still in the 13th century the Armenian State of Cilicia intended to preserve its territories on the one hand, while on the other it tried to secure the cultural integrity of Armenia, which was endangered by the Crusaders, the orthodox world, as well as by Muslim states. According to Peter Halfter, after the January’s coronation in 1198 Armenia was not included in the Eastern Crusade countries, however it sent the cultural message to both eastern and western powers. It functioned as a bridge, in terms of worldwide cultural, spiritual, political relationships. The alliance with the Mongols opened new horizons for the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, however the glorious era came to its end in 1266 with Sultan Baibars’ invasions, after which Cilicia started to fight a life-death fight for its independence. Meanwhile the European powers fed the Armenian state with false hopes. Within the frames of his studies, Peter Halfter covered a pivotal question: to what extent did the Armenian state merge with the Latin states? In fact, in the years of the Mongolian

rule Cilicia, understanding the over-avidity of the latter, intended to draw the Eastern and Western interests closer.

Meetings with Peter Halfter occurred at different Armenological forums in different cities of the world (Frankfurt, Yerevan, Ann Arbor, Montpellier). He was always enthusiastic and full of hope for the future which he infected everybody with around him. Within the frames of his interests there were issues on medieval topics and nowadays' questions we all are concerned with. His absence at conferences will be a huge loss for the Armenian studies. Nevertheless, his scientific heritage will be the lighthouse thanks to which the roses planted by the gifted scientist and a good friend will gradually blossom.

Peter Halfter left us unexpectedly. Rafi Kantyan, the current editor of the "Deutsch-Armenische Korrespondenz", spoke about him. Peter was a dedicated, highly competent scientist whose contribution has left an indelible trace in the Armenian studies. The talented scientist also had other favorite occupations we have so far been unaware of. His paintings are part of different exhibitions. The family promised to share the burden of restoring the Gothic Church of Marbach, thus making Peter's dream come true.

A huge crowd together with his friends and family members attended the funeral on Thursday, April 26. The mayor of Marbach-Nekor was also there to bid his last good-bye to him. Andrea Schmidt, another Armenologist and Peter's colleague contributing to his publications read the obituary.

On behalf of all intellectuals, researchers involved in the Armenian studies, we would like to express our condolences to Peter Halfter's family and colleagues. His funeral was decent and proper. Our friend, before whose grave we bend down, is buried in the cemetery of the Gothic church St. Alexanderkirche.

The eminent scientist abandoned us, leaving his trace in our lives. Long live those who continue his legacy!

The Bibliography of Peter Halfter's Principal Works

We implore the readers' forgiveness as the bibliography has been compiled within several days only. In the list of publications, the scientist's non-academic works are not included. Unfortunately, the following articles Georgier und Armenier in Heeresdienst der Mongolen; "O mirum et cunctis ad mirantibus pavendum!", "Ein Brief aus dem Morgenland an den Erzbischof von Besancon am Vorabend des funften Kreuzzuges; Katholicos Grigoris IV, Degh'a, der Fall

Peter Halfter (1944–2018)

Jerusalems 1187 und der Kreuzzug Friedrich I. Barbarossa” have not been published yet. Claude Mutaſyan, Andrea Schmidt and Gagik Danielyan have collaborated to verify certain data concerning Peter Halfter’s biography and complete the Bibliography.

AZAT BOZOYAN