

Reflections on the book "Levon Aronian"

I should note at once that this book is a unique one. It is unique in the sense that the book about the great chess player of today was written ... by his mother. You must admit that this is not only interesting, but also quite correct. After all, it is the mother who can recount objectively and truthfully the path followed by her son! It is the mother who knows the smallest details of her child's biography and is well familiar with everything that has made Levon happy, as well as with all events, which have upset, worried, and alarmed him in different periods of his life.

Of course, the family - Levon's mother, father, and sister - has played a crucial role both in the formation of his personality and the development of his chess talent. No doubt, Mrs. Seda Sarkisovna saw and understood that her son was very gifted, but she was also aware that the boy's talent needed to be developed in every possible way. And the family made an extremely uncommon (at first glance), but correct decision: they asked Melikset Khachiyani - at that time a good chess player and coach, a graduate of the Chess Department of the Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture (later Levon Aronian himself graduated from that higher educational institution) - to live in their house. Currently, Khachiyani is a well-known

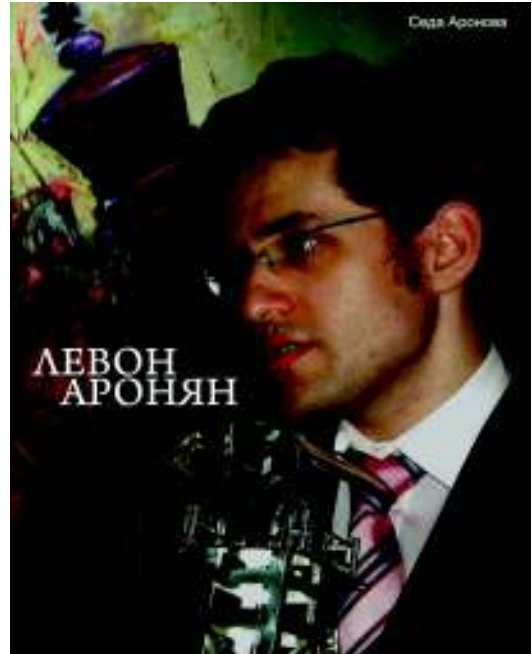
grandmaster and resides in the U.S. So Khachiyani became the fifth member of the tight-knit family. The unusual creative collaboration lasted five whole years and yielded its results. You must admit that it is a rare occurrence and that not every family can venture on such a "reckless" step. Yet it is one of those families that American philosopher George Santayana described as a "masterpiece of nature".

Levon Aronian's victories in the international arena have attracted attention. The Yerevan-based guy has become an idol worshiped by lovers of chess art throughout the world: people cannot but admire his playing style, which is impressive, creative, and extremely original.

Aronian is still young, but as a chess player he has already achieved a great deal. However, the hardest struggle - a struggle for the chess crown is still ahead of him. Millions of his fans firmly believe that Aronian will successfully accomplish this task as well.

Professor Gagik Hakobian ,

ex-Champion of Yerevan and Armenia, Honored Trainer of the Republic of Armenia, Master of Sports of the USSR, Master of the International Chess Federation (FIDE).



Below are several excerpts from the book:

"The return from Germany proved terrible for everyone. Planes either did not fly at all or flew very seldom so it was almost impossible to get tickets. Levon and other children crammed into the plane through the emergency entrance, thanks to the ingenuity of Melikset Khachiyani who enticed the special police force member guarding the entrance by a mirage of a \$100 banknote. The children and Melik were sitting on the floor all along. We did not go to the airport and waited them at home. Finally, at around three in the morning Levon, dressed in Melik's jacket, and Melik himself entered the apartment. We, the parents and the sister, rushed to embrace and kiss Levon, but, throwing off the



jacket, he approached the chessboard and said: "Wait, I've got an idea, and I need to check it as soon as possible".

We realized that it was the beginning of his great path"

"One day everyone in the Chess House began to bustle about: the famous Grand Master Rafael Vahanian arrived to watch a tournament of Armenia's Supreme Chess League. It seemed incredible to approach him and shake his hand, but all of us were so eager to do it! Quite unexpectedly Rubik



Vardanian, a good-natured man and a chess fan, came up to us, saying that he would request an "audience" for Levon, telling Levon to take his exercise book with chess games written in it.

At the appointed hour, Vahanian received Levon in the backstage area of the play hall and suddenly asked him to show the first game he had ever played abroad. Khachiyani and I got panicky: two and a half years had passed since that game! Levon, however, was not taken aback and began showing his game with Icelandic player Kyartarsson, ana-

lyzing each move. When explaining the eighth move, he said that Mikhail Tal had played in the same way but that his analyses showed that it would be better to play in a different way, and Levon demonstrated the preferable continuation with his small hands.

Vahanian burst into such a loud laughter that the Supreme League players stopped playing and came to see what was going on"

"All this was taking place in the autumn, and then the winter started. Neither the Chess House nor the chess school was heated. To find a way out and conduct tournaments, Hovik Khalikyan put a stove in the basement of the chess school, making it a condition that everyone should bring firewood. We used to bring small branches from felled trees in the streets, whereas large branches were a "freely convertible currency" so it was impossible to find them outdoors. Unfortunately, those damp branches were giving off smoke instead of heat. It usually took us two hours to get to the building where tournaments were held. We had to put cellophane into our boots, but the cellophane would often tear en route, with the cold water soaking into our boots. Evidently, there are some unwrit-

ten laws in nature, and talent becomes apparent in the struggle for life. Exhausted by severe trials, I once shouted at Levon: "It would be better if you were born to a rich family". He replied quietly: "In that case I would not need chess. I would lie on the sofa and watch videos (at the time a video recorder was a hard-to-get thing that only rich people could afford).

I think there is no other explanation for the emergence of such



talented chess players at that time as Karen Asrian, Gabriel Sargsyan, Varuzhan Hakobian, Sergei Movsesian, and Tigran L. Petrosian who are still a dominating force for Armenia during team championships".

