

Armenian History and the Question of Genocide

Author: Michael M. Gunter (New York-London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011) XI + 195 pages.

Prof. Michael M. Gunter's book is the first one that is specifically devoted to criticize the "Armenian genocide" label, published by a mainstream, Western publishing house and written by a non-Turkish scholar. For example, *The Armenian File* was the work of Kâmuran Gürün, and Gunter Lewy's *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey* was published by the University of Utah Press—after the Oxford University Press capitulated in front of the pressure exerted by Peter Balakian. The late Stanford Jay Shaw was a victim of harassment and even of an attempt of assassination, as recalls Prof. Gunter (p. 54). As a result, the publication of such a book is a great victory of freedom of expression against intellectual terrorism.

This study is an honest synthesis of the historiography existing around 2010 and an analysis of the conflict since 1970s. It is divided in six chapters. The first one is an overview of the Armenian issue from 1878 to 1918, with a focus on classical Armenian and Turkish positions, finishing by an attempt of synthesis. The second one develops the reflection, deepening the issue of what is genocide (and what is not) and exposing some new developments of the historiography during the 2000s, particularly the book of Gunter Lewy. The third chapter analyses the aspect the most studied since 1980s by Prof. Gunter: Armenian terrorism in 20th century. The next one is, in a certain sense, the chronological continuation of the previous one, presenting the contemporary Armenian lobbying in the West. The fifth chapter answers the accusations of "Turkish counter-terror and harassment" and the sixth one, correspondingly, presents the attempts of rapprochement since mid-1980s. In spite of some evitable inaccuracies, this concise book is recommended.

Presenting the historical dimension of the conflict, Michael M. Gunter must be praised for several courageous demonstrations. In particular, he provides a concise rebuttal of the simplifications on the alleged "Ottoman night": In fact, the Ottoman Christians, particularly the Armenians, experienced an economic rise in 19th century, and possessed advantages that the Muslims never