

BOOK REVIEWS¹

Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 195 pages.

Reviewed by Israel W. Charny, Executive Director, Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem; Awarded Armenian Presidential Prize 2011, Editor-in-Chief, Web Magazine GPN GENOCIDE PREVENTION NOW 2010-2012.

This is the BEST book I have ever read -- which means it is the best of the whole *terrible* world of books that are devoted to ridiculous and ugly denials of absolutely factual known genocides. It is, therefore, a TERRIBLE work.

So the question is what is the meaning of my quite genuine praise for something that I condemn so strongly and uncompromisingly?

This is the best DENIALIST work I have ever seen insofar as it is written with a quietness, and solidity of coverage of issues, and even more *as if* with an apparent fairness of representing ranges of ideas and opinions about issues rather than strong-arm statements of single opinion-truths.

Moreover, Michael Gunter, a professor at Tennessee Tech, opens the book with a clear acknowledgment-disclosure of his significant period of lecturing in Turkey, and even as he says "I have long wanted to present an objective analysis of the Turkish point of view" he clearly conveys that he is very much on the side of Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide.

Already in the Foreword Gunter cites a smaller number (600,000) of Armenian victims than is generally accepted, a reduction of the number of victims that has long been characteristic of traditional Turkish denial propaganda. He says right out, so that there is no doubt for the reader where his "objective analysis" is heading, that these deaths - - whatever the number, even the lower number would clearly constitute a major genocide - - that "It was neither a premeditated policy perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish government nor an event unilaterally implemented without cause."

Yes, the author says "cause." If there were killings they were *caused*, and you know by whom -- the victims of course. So we know from the first page of the Foreword quite clearly where our 'objective' analyst stands. Gunter is not only a denier who revises some of the facts of the genocide - thus the lower number of victims than most historians recognize; he also denies the very *essence* of the genocide as having been in any way a premeditated government policy. And he also has pulled one of the ultimates in the denial kit bag of justifying the murders - telling us there was cause for the murders. According to Gunter, the Armenians forced the Turkish government to contain them as rebels. *Tell that to Armenian*

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soldiers in the Turkish Army as they are taken out and murdered en masse. Tell that to Armenian women and children staggering in the 'desert,' starving, raped, watching their children die or be killed, and themselves cut down by swords.

But I haven't finished all my praise of Michael Gunter. Gunter is nonetheless a kind denier who continuously throws us bones for our respite - and thereby of course it would seem proves and reproves his announced objectivity. Thus in the same poisonous Foreword he quickly adds to his core statement of denial crocodile tears, "Of course in no way does this excuse the horrible excesses committed by the Turks." *Oh, thank you, Michael, for your understanding of our pain and outrage that you indeed share - - or do you?*

Perhaps the highest praise I can give denier Gunter is that unlike the great deniers that have gone before him - of the Armenian Genocide but also deniers of other genocides such as the Holocaust - Gunter cites a large number of those of us scholars and writers who have published the now wonderfully strong literature confirming the Armenian Genocide - - and I would add genocides of other peoples alongside the Armenians, specifically the Assyrians, Greeks, and Yezidis,^{2,3,4} and also the beginning moves of the Ottoman government toward a potential genocide of the Jews in Palestine.⁵ Deniers generally stay away from us writers who confirm the Armenian Genocide like a plague. Or they may cite one or two of us to demolish our statements, but rarely if ever do they assemble such a huge number of scholars who clearly stand by recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Gunter also refers to works like *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* and laws and legal institutions and more that clearly account the Armenian Genocide.

Look at the following unbelievable list to who Gunter writes about or cites (- - it is a great list of so many people we would want to invite to a party):

[In a few cases I add explanatory notes]

Akcam, Taner

Alvarez, Alex

Balakian, Peter

2. Genocide Prevention Now (2011) Special Issue, *Armenian Genocide and Co-Victims: Assyrians, Yezidis, Greeks*, available at: <http://www.genocidepreventionnow.org/Home/GPNISSUES/SpecialIssue5Winter2011.aspx>

3. Tessa Hofmann, Matthias Bjørnlund, Vasileios Meichanetsidis (Editors), *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks: Studies on the State-Sponsored Campaign of Extermination of the Christians of Asia Minor, 1912-1922 and Its Aftermath: History, Law, Memory* (New York & Athens: Aristide D. Caratzas, 2011).

4. Israel W. Charny, "The Integrity and Courage to Recognize All the Victims of a Genocide," in Tessa Hofmann, Matthias Bjørnlund, Vasileios Meichanetsidis (Editors), *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks: Studies on the State-Sponsored Campaign of Extermination of the Christians of Asia Minor, 1912-1922 and Its Aftermath: History, Law, Memory* (New York & Athens: Aristide D. Caratzas, 2011), 21-38; Republished in *Genocide Prevention Now*, Issue 10, Spring 2012. available at: <http://genocidepreventionnow.org/GPNSearchResults/tabid/64/ctl/DisplayCitation/mid/400/cid/115/Default.aspx>

5. For an introduction to the history of the Turks' expulsion of Jews from Tel Aviv in 1917, see the excellent work by Yair Auron, including the additional references that he gives: Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 73-83.

Bardakjian, Kevork

Bloxam, Donald

Bryce, Lord James

The Blue Book by Lord Bryce and Arnold Toynbee

Charny, Israel

Dadrian, Vahakn

Davis, Leslie

Dink, Hrant

Dole, Robert (Senator)

Fein, Helen

Forty Days of Musa Dagh by Franz Werfel

Gayssot Act

This is a French Law against denials of crimes including genocide committed by the Nazis during WWII, and that is the basis for the recent efforts in France to expand French law to cover other recognized genocides such as the Armenian Genocide.

Genocide resolutions by the US Congress

Gurr, Ted Robert

Harff, Barbara

Hovanissian, Richard G.

Huttenbach, Henry

International Court of Justice

International Criminal Court

International Crisis Group

Johannsohn, Kurt

Jorgensen, Torben

Kaiser, Hilmar

Kopf, David

Kuschner, Bernard

Kristof, Nicholas

Kuper, Leo

In my judgment, following Lemkin, the late Leo Kuper was the preeminent genocide scholar in the world, and he adamantly recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Lemkin, Raphael

Lemkin is the creator of the word *genocide* and the father of the UN Genocide Convention. Much of Lemkin's early work was deeply inspired by the Armenian Genocide.

Lepsius, Johannes

Libaridian, Gerard

Markusen, Eric

Melson, Robert

Minasian, Edward

Midlarsky, Manus

Morgenthau, Henry

Morgenthau is the well-known US ambassador to Turkey who wrote so fully and passionately about the Armenian Genocide at the time. As noted earlier, at a conference in Turkey at Istanbul University we heard pseudo-learned allegations that Morgenthau's well-known diary is a forged document, like many other evidences of the Armenian Genocide that Turks easily call "forgeries," including even the record of *their* court martials of the genocides.

Naim Bey

Oran Baskin

A leading Turkish intellectual who fights against government denial of the Armenian Genocide

Pamuk Orhan

Papazian, Dennis

Phillips, David L.

Leader of TARC (The Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission) which contracted with the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) for a report on whether the Armenian Genocide indeed constituted genocide. When the Commission ruled that it did, all the Turkish participants in TARC pulled out, never to be seen again in that supposed effort at a joint commission with the Armenians.⁶ Despite my high praises of Gunter for covering lots of differing ideas, I note that he does not even mention the ICTJ ruling.

Power, Samantha

Rummel, Rudolf

Safrastian, Ruben

Sanjian, Avedis

Sarafian, Ara

Sassounian, Harut

Semelin, Jacques

Smith, Roger; and Eric Markusen, and Robert Jay Lifton

Smith, Markusen and Lifton authored a famous wonderful paper about how Turkey's ambassador to the US, with the assistance of an ostensible scholar at Princeton, went after Lifton for daring to refer to the Armenian Genocide in his milestone study of the Nazi

6. International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) Report Prepared for TARC, *The Applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to Events which Occurred during the Early Twentieth Century*, Executive Summary of Legal Conclusions (February 10, 2003), available at: http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.244/current_category.5/affirmation_detail.html

doctors at Auschwitz.

Staub, Ervin

Suny, Ronald

Tatz, Colin

Ternon, Yves

Theriault, Henry

Vartian, Ross

Walker, Christopher

Wegner, Armin

Weitz, Eric

Zoryan Institute

Zwaan, Ton

Whew! Wow! (*There are so many sources given by Gunter that I now feel badly for some dear and respected colleagues, such as Yair Auron and Rouben Adalian, for examples, who have been passed over by Gunter undeservedly.*)

Have you ever seen a denier of any genocide who quotes so extensively from so many sources that say clearly and decisively that the very genocide he is denying really took place? Now the reader will understand more fully my enthusiastic ‘recommendation’ of this book.

How can you expect anything but objectivity, fairness and serious scholarship from someone who is so open-minded and thorough?

Gunter refers to a Turkish assertion taken from a book published in Ankara that claims the famous British *Blue Book* by Lord Bryce and Arnold Toynbee is a “so-called document that contains nothing more than one sided British propaganda and hence is not worth dwelling upon.” (p. 13) Here, our open-minded scholar who quotes so many of us was quoting from one of his Turkish sources, and indeed it is very important to bring in Turkish sources too, isn’t it? But let’s also hear what Gunter himself says immediately following: “The above analysis also indicated that both Bryce and Morgenthau held powerful and deep rooted prejudices against the Turks that undoubtedly prevented them from seeing the entire situation. Although the Armenians did suffer grievously so too did their antagonists.” (p. 13)

As noted, Gunter acknowledges some killing but explains the killing constituted perfectly normal security measures against a rebellious people. Gunter refers to *some* people who see “a justified Turkish response to Armenian and foreign provocations [and that] the picture *they* paint is very different from the one depicted by the Armenians and largely accepted in the West.” (p. 5) In this connection we note that the failure to mention co-victims of the Armenians further protects the spurious argument that Turkish killing was an understandable self-defense against the rebellious Armenians allying with Russia. The fact is that the Turks were out to kill many non-Turks and non-Muslims. See also a recent book by George Shirinian, well-respected director of the Zoryan Institute, on the fate of the Greeks.⁷

7. *The Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Ottoman Greek Genocide: Essays on Asia Minor, Pontos, and*

How does our intrepid objective scholar conclude his book? Of course he wants to be helpful and help in curbing the denial that fuels “continuing fear and revenge.” (p. 137) So he offers strategies beginning with splitting the “more affluent Armenian diaspora” that is so concerned with “allegations of genocide” from “the nation in Armenia” and the “immediate economic reality of Armenia.” Yes, he wants to be large-hearted and he calls on Turkey to help Armenia with its economic problems, and thus in eternal *realpolitik* “Turkey may begin to split the two Armenian actors.” (p. 137) But all is not lost in deception. Goodhearted Gunter also includes a proposal to Turkey to open the borders it has lockjammed with Armenia for so many years.

As for the piece de résistance of “genocide allegations,” Gunter proposes that Turkey should continue to advocate a “joint commission of historians to undertake an objective analysis.” He notes again, in his fair way of course, that the Armenian diaspora opposes such a commission and therefore “once again Turkey is presented with an opportunity to portray the Armenian diaspora as obstructionist.” (p. 137) As noted earlier there is not a word on the very responsible objective commission that was hired years ago by TARC (Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission) in which the Turks were enthusiastic partners only to turn their backs on the results of the independent commission that said there was no basis for their denial - it was genocide!⁸

Conclusion:

I have long been a student of the language and logic devices employed by deniers of *all* genocides. As noted, Michael Gunter has expanded the roster of denial strategies meaningfully and thereby qualifies for the high praise I have for his book.

This book should be studied by all students of denial for its artful stratagems of sounding fair, acting fairly, citing scholarship that covers divergent and contradictory points of view, speaking consistently softly, and of course calling for justice and peace, all in the course of organizing a disarming, deceitful, anti-history and anti-value-of-life work that should frighten anybody who is concerned with integrity in intellectual and scholarly works, and genuine valuing of human life.

Once upon a time deniers were so wild and obvious buffoons that they claimed in respect of the Armenian Genocide that the Ottoman Turkish government protected and took care of the poor Armenian exiles in their forced march out of Armenia – no mention of course of the many Armenians they killed outright. About the Holocaust, old-fashioned deniers said that there were no gas chambers, and that the poor Jews died from wartime conditions, even also happier nonsense that the inmates at Auschwitz dined to good music and swam in a swimming pool.

Now increasingly we have a whole series of recognized academicians who write in our contemporary language of scholarship and make their points in the name of open discussion and fairness. Michael Gunter can be congratulated that he has risen to the top of this group.⁹ He is a bona fide academic who is one hell of an artful liar.

Eastern Thrace, 1912-1923, edited by George N. Shirinian (Bloomington, IL: The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center, Inc., 2012).

8. Enver Ziya Karal, *Armenian Question (1878-1923)*, (Ankara: Gunduz, 1975), 18., International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) Report Prepared for TARC (February 10, 2003).

9. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

Additional Writings on Denial by Israel W. Charny

Selected publications on denial of genocide by the author on how denials are created and the concepts and the languages that are used to get these crazy ideas across to rational people:

Templates for Gross Denial of a Known Genocide: A Manual: “The Holocaust is the Hoax of the Twentieth Century.” “There Never Was an Armenian Genocide.” In *Encyclopedia of Genocide*. Edited by Israel W. Charny. (Santa Barbara CA: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 168.

Originally published in the *Internet on the Holocaust and Genocide*, 1986, Issue Seven, 3. Serious, real, but also inadvertently humorous as one sees the ridiculous shemas designed for denying an established genocide.

These templates were originally developed in a dialogue with Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library, and were also based on joint research with Marjorie Housepian-Dobkin, a pioneer in writing about the Armenian Genocide as “the forgotten genocide.

“How to Avoid (Legally) Conviction for Crimes of Genocide: A One-Act Reading,” In a special issue (Teaching about Genocide, edited by Samuel Totten) of the *Social Science Record*, 1987, 24 (2), 89-93.

A satire--at the legal offices as it were of “Satan, Whore, and Conformist, Attorneys-at-Law” who conduct a consulting firm catering to the likes of clients like Talaat, Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, and Pol Pot.

Israel W. Charny and Daphna Fromer, “A Follow-up of the Sixty-nine Scholars Who Signed an Advertisement Questioning the Armenian genocide,” *Internet on the Holocaust and Genocide, Special Issue on the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide*, special double issue, no. 25/26 (April 1990), 5-6

Reprinted in *Journal of the Armenian Assembly of America*, 1990, 17 (1), 5. A fuller report of this research was published in an academic journal:

Israel W. Charny and Daphna Fromer, “Denying the Armenian Genocide: Patterns of thinking as defence mechanisms,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 32(1), 1998, 39-49. A classic study that has been widely referred to over the years in which, after promising the 69 signators absolute confidentiality, a surprising number acknowledged the mass murders of the Armenians, although most would not call the event “genocide.”

“L’intolérable perversion des universitaires négateurs du génocide arménien ou de l’Holocauste,” *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporain*, 3, 1997, 123-141. (French).

See the English version of this paper: The unbearable corruption of academics who deny the Armenian Genocide or the Holocaust. *IDEA, A Journal of Social Issues*, 2001, 6 (1). <http://www.ideajournal.com/articles.php?id=27>

Background:

Censored by the Publisher

The above paper was accepted for publication in a book, *The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, by Palgrave (Macmillan UK), but was then canceled by the publisher in fear of suits by deniers of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. The paper had been initially accepted and presented at a conference, *Remembering for the Future III*, Oxford, 2000. It was then chosen by the conference organizers to be included in an announcement of a selection of sample articles in a pre-publication brochure announcing the forthcoming book that was distributed internationally by the publishers.

The reason the paper was then removed peremptorily from the book was a legal opinion received from the publisher's attorney that this paper could draw libel suits from the academics discussed—including, and particularly, David Irving! This concern was expressed at the height of anticipations of the then forthcoming Irving-Lipstadt court case. No amount of effort to convince the publishers or the organizers of the conference to stand up to the risks and not succumb to the deniers were of avail.

This story was documented no less than by David Irving himself on his website (!) in a story posted June 27, 2001 which was reprinted from *The Armenian Reporter International*, December 30, 2000. As noted above the same paper already had been published in France, in French in 1997. The paper was now accepted for publication by the electronic journal, IDEA.

“Innocent denials of known genocides: A further contribution to a psychology of denial of genocide,” *Human Rights Review*, 1 (3), 2000, 15-39.

The majority of deniers in this world are not “malevolent deniers,” nor are they the exhibitionists or negativistic people who take pleasure in stirring up storms of provocation. They are rather ‘innocents’ who know too little about a genocide but who willingly choose to move towards and adopt the “other side” or point of view about a disputed genocide -- ultimately all genocides are disputed and denial is in fact aptly called “the last stage of genocide.”

Why do they adopt this position? To what extent do they become advocates of denial? The paper presents two axes for classifying and understanding deniers. The first axis pertains to the extent of failure to acquire knowledge and the extent to which one subscribes to distortion of knowledge; and the second axis evaluates the extent to which a denier signals approval, encouragement and outright incitement of genocidal violence -- including unconscious wishes, to approve, encourage, and incite renewed violence.

“A Classification of Denials of the Holocaust and Other Genocides,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5(1), 2003, 11-34.

This is a major paper providing a comprehensive -but always growing-classification of many different types and strategies of denials of established genocides

An updating of the above classification was published in GPN Web Magazine: A Classification of Denials of the Holocaust and Other Genocides - Updated 2012, <http://www.genocidepreventionnow.org/GPNSearchResults/tabid/64/ctl/DisplayArticle/mid/400/aid/655/Default.aspx>

“A Casebook of Denials of Doing Harm to Others and Rewards to People and Nations who Overcome Denial,” in Şafak Ural, Feridam Emecam, and Mustafa Aydın, (Editors), *The New Approaches to Turkish-Armenian Relations* (Turkish and English-language articles combined), (Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 2008), 728-775.

Republished in *GPN Web Magazine, Issue 3 (2010). A Casebook of Denials of Doing Harm to Others and Rewards to People and Nations Who Overcome Denial* <http://www.genocidepreventionnow.org/Home/GPNISSUES/Issue3Summer2010/tabid/70/ctl/DisplayArticle/mid/460/aid/285/Default.aspx>

This paper was presented to a conference in Istanbul (!!) amidst a sea of atrocious denials by the overwhelming majority of presenters- - e.g., Morgenthau was a forgery, the court record of the Turkish court martial of the perpetrators was also a forgery. There were 5 of us who were invited scholars from outside of Turkey and who, known to the organizers, clearly validated the facts of the Armenian Genocide. The resulting book is a very unusual, almost comic collection of many denialist papers and our papers which clearly testify to the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide. It is amazing that the conference organizers published our pieces; moreover, my paper included a disclaimer that I insisted must introduce the paper, criticizing the overall predominant denial.