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Two Opposite Figures of the History of the Armenian Genocide
Discussed in Public Lectures

Professor Hans-Lukas Kieser, Manoogian Simone Foundation Visiting Scholar at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, presented two public lectures last week, each devoted to two opposite figures critical for the understanding of Armenian history during and after the Genocide.

On March 12 Professor Kieser addressed the University community and discussed the personality of Talaat Pasha, the chief architect of the Genocide from a biographical point of view. Talaat should be seen as a complex figure, argued Professor Kieser, one who had the closest ties with Armenian leaders, particularly leaders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation; he was involved in all major negotiations related to reforms in the Armenian provinces. Yet, at the same time, equally easily he ordered the deportation of Armenian which he knew would end up in their deaths. "He had two souls," Kieser stated, "but violated one of them."

In his second lecture, to the larger community in Dearborn, Michigan, on March 15, Professor Kieser presented the biography of the Swiss missionary Jacob Kunzler who, supported by his wife, spent 23 years in Urfa and another 27 in Lebanon. In Urfa he tried to save as many lives of Armenians as possible and in Lebanon he organized aid to the refugees and initiated a number of projects to facilitate their lives, including the Azounieh sanatorium which still functions. "For many survivors and their offspring," said Kieser, "Kunzler remains the most important figure in the struggle for survival of the Armenian people."

Professor Kieser, one of the most prominent scholars specializing in late Ottoman history, teaches at the University of Zurich. As Manoogian Simone Foundation Visiting

Scholar with the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan during this semester, he is teaching two courses: “ ‘Missionary America’ in the Middle East,” and “Turkish and Kurdish Nationalisms in late 19th and early 20th century.”