BLOOD APRICOTS

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Keghart.com Board Editorial, 27 April 2011

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Nowadays there's another regrettable Armenian behavior, here in North America. We are referring to Armenians who see nothing wrong in buying Turkish goods, especially food products. The trend is not as high profile, public or blatant, but still it's as hurtful to the Armenian nation as the unconscionable sun seekers of Yerevan. We have no way of measuring the volume or dollar value of these made-in-Turkey product purchases. However, that's of secondary importance in this debate.

Our individual and collective efforts to obtain justice for 1915 becomes a cruel farce when we buy Turkey-made goods. What would be the reaction of odars, who are familiar with our recent history and Genocide recognition campaigns, when they hear Armenians are merrily shopping for Turkish sweets and biscuits? What kind of message are we sending denialist Turks who would love to believe we are slowly giving up our sacred cause, the memory of our 1.5 million martyrs. As well, what kind of hypocritical message are we sending to our children? How can we have the Ararat vista on the living room wall when we are serving Turkish pickles in the kitchen?

It's not just pickles. It's dried apricots, it's hazelnuts, it's figs, halva, olive oil, spices, candies, biscuit, denim jeans, towels, shirts and more.

Those who say we should separate Turkish individuals from their government and not boycott Turkish goods, are sadly mistaken. Turkish businesses, often heavily subsidized, are one with Ankara. It's Turkey Inc. in every way, except in name. For example, prominent Turkish businessman, Kaan Soyak, funds his denialist campaigns through his import/export firm. The recent and newfound political and military confidence of Turkey is to a certain extent rooted in the country's healthy economy. Buying Turkish goods further fattens Ankara coffers.

Besides, why buy Turkish products when there are alternatives from other Middle Eastern countries? Every product line listed above is also available from neighboring countries. Quality and price are

also none issues since there isn't much difference between Turkish and other Middle Eastern products and prices.

These Turkish products often come from Western Armenia and Cilicia. The "Turkish" hazelnut or apricot you put in your mouth might have come from trees planted by your ancestors on Armenian land. Armenians who were slaughtered by the Turkish government and irregulars. Everyone has heard of the "blood" diamonds of West Africa. How about the blood apricots, hazelnuts, olives…of Turkey?

Some Armenians, who wish to excuse their disgraceful behavior, might point out that the Republic of Armenia imports millions of dollars worth of Turkish products. We would like to remind these lame apologists of what many an Armenian father, over many generations, has advised his children: *Yetteh engert daniken tsadkeh, toon al guh tsadkehs?* ("If your friend jumps from the roof, do you follow suit?"

A few days ago we commemorated the Genocide. We gathered, listened to impassioned speeches, sang songs, perhaps wept. Then we went home. These remembrance gatherings would be hypocritical and a waste of time, unless they are followed by action--no matter how small the initiative seems.

An Armenian boycott of Turkish products will not bankrupt Turkey; it wouldn't even make a dent on their economy. However, as we said, that's not the point. The boycott should be an automatic, part and parcel of our cause. A boycott will also make us proud that we do follow our words by action. A boycott would—even if in a small way—help our communities come together in a demonstrable collective action.

Next time you pick up that jar of olives at the Middle Eastern grocery store, please check the label, and put it back if it says, "Made in Turkey."