IT HAS BEGUN

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Editorial, 24 December 2014

What will be Ankara's response to the commemorations of the Genocide of Armenians? Earlier this year several official Turkish spokesmen announced that the government had allocated a multi-million dollar budget in an orchestrated campaign to combat the Armenian assertions re the Ottoman Turkey/Republic of Turkey planned annihilation of Armenians from 1915 to 1923. The Turkish denialist campaign will be probably monolithic, unlike the Armenian effort which will be multi-pronged because of the Armenia and Armenian Diaspora duality, in addition to the Diaspora's far-flung status.

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A street in the Buykere district of Istanbul will be named after Turkish-Armenian film actor Nubar Terziyan.

Armenian chef Grigori K. Antinyan was invited to Turkey in a "food for diplomacy" project where he taught culinary students the mysteries of Armenian cuisine. Never mind that this sounds like carrying coal to Coventry since it's universally recognized that every Armenian dish, sauce, condiment and dessert is of echt Turkish origin.

Mayor Mehmed Sayit Dagoglu of Balu would restore an 800-year-old Armenian church in that city. Apparently, the church has been finally pensioned off after years of serving as target for stone-throwing boys.

Etyen Mahcupyan, former editor of "Agos" (2007-2010) and contributor to "Taraf" daily and pro-

government "AK" has been appointed senior advisor to Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. He will work in the "areas of democracy, government and public relations, and minorities," according to government sources. It's the first time that a non-Muslim has been hired for such a position. Mahcupyan promptly and unsurprisingly denied that his sinecure had anything to do with the Armenians. Right.

MP Mustafa Balbay announced that the 8-volume "Archival Documents on the Armenian activities in 1914-1918", which denies the Genocide, were recently removed from the Turkish General Staff website. But what's to stop their reinstallation on January 1, 2016?

The Aghtamar Holy Cross Church in Lake Van has been identified as Armenian by a government-posted sign. For years Turkey has insisted that the island's name derives from "Akdamar" and a Turkish folk tale. "Tale" is right, as in fairy tale.

Lo and behold: a tourist billboard in Ani now says King Kakig was Armenian. But who were the Armenians? A long-disappeared nomadic Turkic Anatolian tribe?

Ankara returned some real estate to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had a photo-op with a senior patriarchate official.

By no means is the above list comprehensive.

Some would argue that these developments have nothing to do with the centennial of the Genocide and that they are positive signals and an aspect of Turkish liberalization. Even more optimistic souls would naively assume that Turkey is edging closer to admitting its horrendous crime against the Armenian nation. However, the timing and their volume, in such a short span of time, would indicate otherwise. A recent statement from Erdogan also underlines that these "happy news" blips are part of the incipient Turkish campaign. During his speech at the French Institution of International Relations, Erdogan chided that Turkey had manifested goodwill and extended its hand in peace to Armenians, but the Armenians had rejected it. "Despite all our constructive approach, Armenia and Armenians in Diaspora have not manifested a reasonable demeanor," Erdogan bleated.

Despite his predictable and ennui-inducing harangue in France, it's inconceivable that Erdogan would think the above feints would persuade Armenians to give up their efforts this year, next year or the year after. However, the fact is Armenians are irrelevant to the Turkish government strategy. These PR volleys are largely for the benefit of the mostly ignorant third-party media which would be eager to consider them as genuine peace-making efforts on Ankara's part. The Ankara gestures are meant to portray Armenians are obdurate, vengeful, unrealistic, etc. etc. They are also intended to provide an "out" to governments which don't recognize the Genocide.

Finally, the most telling proof that the above goodwill gestures are feints to mislead Armenians is the Turkish government's announcement (according to the "Pusalhaber" website) that Ankara has established 5,000 overseas Turkish community organizations to strengthen its lobbying efforts and

to combat the Armenian Diaspora. In addition to helping fund these civil society groups, Turkey has staffed some of them with foreign ministry officials.

What should be the Diaspora Armenian reaction to Ankara's continued policy of mythinformation and denialism?

Anger, contempt, and jeering are lazy and don't advance our cause.

Here are some of the steps the Armenian Diaspora must take:

Expose the foreign government's intrusion into the domestic affairs of the countries where Armenians are citizens.

Intensify and expand efforts to spread the word.

Concentrate on external communication and commemorations rather than keep them inside Armenian community "walls": Armenians know what happened; it's the non-Armenians who should be informed and convinced of the justness of Hye Tadd. A good example of reaching to the "outside" world is the Toronto Armenian community blood bank campaign next April. Blood donated from Armenians, in memory of the Genocide, will be distributed to the Canadian Red Cross.

Time is running out. The Armenian Diaspora should devise ASAP as many as possible DRAMATIC, NOVEL, and GLOBAL events to draw the attention of the media and the public to the ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OF LIES.

Unflinching steadfastness, especially when Ankara brings out its big propaganda guns to promote its Genocide-denying enterprise, is key.

Ankara has the money. We have the truth. Let's deploy the facts in an effective manner to combat Ankara's expensively-bought untruths.