AGOS' CHANGING EDITORIAL POLICY

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Agos, which published its first issue on April 5th, 1996, is a weekly newspaper published in Turkish and Armenian. In the first issue of the newspaper, the owner and responsible editor was Diran Bakar and the chief editor was Hrant Dink. In the first period of the newspaper's publication, the editorial board included Diran Bakar, Luis Bakar, Yetvart Danzigyan, Hrant Dink, Setrak Davuthan, Nıver Lazoğlu, Harut Özer, Sarkis Seropian, Harutyun Şeşetyan, Anna Turay, Arus Yumul and Sendi Zurikoğlu.[1] Today, the newspaper is published digitally in addition to print media and reaches international readers.

Agos' editorial policy from the first day to the present day focuses on issues such as being a minority in Türkiye, being Armenian in Türkiye, the nation state and globalization, multiculturalism, identity, constitutional citizenship and democracy, the problems of the Armenian community, the Armenian language as a means of self-expression, Türkiye's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and the European Union, the position of the Church within the community, the Law on Relocation and Resettlement, the Property Tax, and the September 6-7 Events.[2]

When the publication life of Agos is analyzed, it is seen that the newspaper created a means of communication between the Armenian community and the Turkish society for a period of time. In the early years of the newspaper's publication life, the newspaper was diligent in the topics it chose and the way it covered these topics. Over time, the newspaper's acceptance by the society and its rise to the position of the representative of the Armenian community in Türkiye led to differentiations in the way it handled the issues.

One of the important transformations in the editorial policy of Agos, which started its publishing life with the support of the church, is the issue of secularization. This issue was initiated after putting forward arguments on the civilization of the church after the increase in Agos readership. Although the newspaper's relations with the Patriarchate improved from time to time as a result of this popularization, the personal relations

between Patriarch Mesrob II and Hrant Dink deteriorated from 2006 onwards to the point that they would never improve. Dink, the editor-in-chief and editorial writer of the newspaper, began to be considered as the unofficial representative of the community both by the Armenian community, the Turkish public and abroad. Although Dink stated in his articles and various interviews that he had no intention of becoming a community leader, over time the newspaper became identified with Dink. Describing himself and his newspaper as leftist, revolutionary, serving the civil society, secularist, Dink claimed that the newspaper was read not only by Armenians, but by Turks and Kurds and that it also had the duty to warn the Patriarchate when necessary. Thus, over time, Agos reached a status beyond being a community newspaper and assumed a different structure from other Armenian newspapers.[3]

Another important transformation in the editorial policy of Agos was the change in editorial policies over time following the death of its chief editor Hrant Dink, who had risen as the intellectual leader of the newspaper. In the recent issues of the newspaper, which is published in Turkish and Armenian, it is observed that Turkish and Armenian news items differ in terms of subject matter and functioning:

One of these is the article titled Հայաստանն է Արցախահայութեան Երաշխաւորը (Armenia is the Guarantor of Artsakh Armenians) published in Armenian in the 1473. issue, but not in Turkish. In the news article, which includes the statements of Artak Beglaryan, it is stated that Azerbaijan has not fulfilled the obligations of the trilateral declaration and Armenia is the primary negotiating authority on the issue of Artsakh Armenians.[4] The biased attitude of Beglaryan, who previously served as state minister in the separatist structure called the so-called Artsakh Republic, is known. In addition, after the Second Karabakh War, the region came under Azerbaijani control and the legitimate government in Karabakh is the Azerbaijani State. Therefore, Azerbaijan is the primary authority for Armenians living in Karabakh.

The example above is not the only news item of Agos not published in Turkish. When one looks at the subjects and contents of the news items that are not in Turkish, one may think that that Agos' policy is not only motivated by freedom of the press. Agos is not a publication that only addresses its Armenian-speaking readers. The newspaper also addresses Turkish readers. Publishing different news in Turkish and Armenian undermines the credibility of the newspaper. Launched in 1996 under the intellectual leadership of a questioning journalist like Hrant Dink, Agos' current policies tend to diasporize Türkiye's authentic Armenian population in contradiction with the principles and mission of the newspaper during the time it was first published.

[1] Hülya Eraslan, AGOS (1996-2005) Türkiyede Yayınlanan Türkçe - Ermenice Gazete Üzerine İnceleme, Ankara 2007, AÜSBE unpublished master thesis, p. 68vd.

[2] Hülya Eraslan, p. 72.

[3] Hülya Eraslan, p. 215vd.

[4] Հայաստանն է արցախահայութեան երաշխաւորը, Agos, 17 December 2024, https://www.agos.com.tr/am/hvotvadzi/31352/hahasdann-e-artsakhahahutyean-yerashkhawvori.

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