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LEGACY OF AHMED BEY AGAOGLU: A HISTORICAL-POLITICAL STUDY OF THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN THE TURKIC WORLD

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The prominent thinker Ahmad bey Agaoglu is a personality who left a deep mark on the development of Azerbaijan, Turkey and the entire Turkic world. The basis of his activity was the synthesis of the ideas of democracy, Turkism and Westernism. Agaoglu saw the progress of the Turkic-Muslim peoples in these values and enlightenment. With his works such as "In a country of free people", he described an ideal model of society based on laws, individual freedom and accountability, although utopian. He emphasized that freedom is possible not only by breaking external, but also internal chains. Agaoglu saw the root of the problems in the East in the "undeveloped individual", "backward justice" and "absence of democracy", and saw the way out of this situation as the unconditional adoption of Western culture. His ideas, ahead of their time, made unparalleled contributions to the formation of national-democratic consciousness.

Keywords: Ahmed bey Agaoglu, Islamic nationalism, Turkism, "In a country of free people", "Three cultures".

Introduction. The outstanding thinker and public figure of Azerbaijan, Ahmed bey Agaoglu, is a personality who left an indelible mark not only on the political and cultural development of the Republics of Azerbaijan and Turkey, but also on the entire Turkic world. His activities were aimed at educating the Turkic peoples in a national spirit and transforming them into a society that meets modern requirements. Agaoglu was bound by an unshakable belief in the ideals of democracy and accepted these values as his main life credo. He is considered one of the rare intellectuals who was able to concentrate the most valuable and highest qualities of humanity in his worldview and actions.

Unfortunately, during the period when Soviet ideology prevailed, Agaoglu, who shared the fate of many other Azerbaijani thinkers, also fell victim to erroneous and politically motivated assessments. The Soviet establishment tried to overshadow his work in front of the Turkic world by portraying him as a nationalist and reactionary bourgeois ideologist. This was part of the policy of isolating national-democratic thought, which was undesirable for the Soviet regime.

However, the true value of Agaoglu was highly appreciated by his contemporaries and early researchers. Yusif Akchura, one of his close comrades and early biographers, always spoke of Ahmed bey Agaoglu with great pride and respect in his works and speeches. Akchura fully confirmed the scale of Agaoglu's historical role by including Agaoglu's name among such great figures as Cemaletdin Afgani and Ziya Gokalp, who made unparalleled contributions to the development of Islamic unity and Turkism. This fact once again proves Agaoglu's irreplaceable place in Turkish social and political thought, despite ideological pressures.

Ahmed bey Agaoglu: Thinker and public figure. The thinker Ahmed bey Agaoglu, who worked at the beginning of the 20th century, set himself the goal of reconciling Western and Islamic cultures in his philosophical thought. It was in this context that he put forward his unique theory called "Islamic nationalism". Based on this theory, Agaoglu tried to ensure both social and political progress of the Turkish-Muslim society by carrying out reforms within Islam. Therefore, one of the main directions of his activity was the promotion of the ideology of Islamism [9, 40-41]. According to Muhammad Amin Rasulzadeh, one of the leaders of the Azerbaijani independence movement and the founders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the most prominent figures of nationalism, especially under the

leadership of Ahmed bey Agaoglu, did not make a serious distinction between Islamism and Turkism. They fought not directly in the name of Turkism, but rather in the name of the ideas of Islamism. As Rasulzadeh noted, the name of the national movement was even "pan-Islamism". This situation was not only due to the misinterpretation of the Russian side, but also to the fact that the national movement itself used Islamism instead of the concept of nationality [10].

Ahmed bey Agaoglu, one of the prominent representatives of the history of Azerbaijani socio-political thought, defended a special ideological line in his activities. Through the theory he presented as "Islamic nationalism", he promoted the idea of unification of the Turkic-Muslim peoples under a single flag, bringing religious nationalism to the fore, although he did not express it directly and openly. This approach, in his opinion, served to ensure the unity of the Turkic world on the basis of common cultural and spiritual values. In his worldview, Islamism, Turkism and Westernization constituted the main ideological lines.

With the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) in 1918-1920, the development of democratic values accelerated in all spheres of the country, including the national press. This democratic atmosphere found its bright manifestation in the political and literary activities of Ahmed bey Agaoglu. These principles of freedom and equality were clearly reflected in the speeches and writings of the thinker. The Azerbaijani thinker was in solidarity with the ideas of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. In all his works, he emphasized that the path to national liberation and the establishment of a stable democracy were closely related to the development of society in the field of culture and education.

Democracy and the "In a country of free people". Agaoglu believed that the progress of society was possible only through enlightenment and the acquisition of democratic values. Ahmed bey Agaoglu most vividly expressed his deep commitment to the ideals of democracy and freedom in his famous work "In a country of free people". In this philosophical treatise, first published in 1930, he describes an ideal model of society. The work shows the path taken by a Turkish intellectual who breaks his chains and escapes to become a citizen in a democratic country. "In a country of free people" is the author's utopian model, but based on concrete principles. This country is a society governed by laws and where the rights of individuals are respected. Solidarity, mutual assistance and distancing from egoism are promoted as basic social values in the work. Agaoglu sees the basis of freedom here in qualities such as purity of thought, purity of word and purity of deed, and completely prohibits lying. At the same time, he puts forward the principle that a free person should not starve in a democratic country, since the dignity of citizenship does not allow society to tolerate the oppression of its own members. This work is a valuable contribution that shows how important Agaoglu's deep thoughts on freedom, justice and democracy are for a society.

The fact that Ahmed bey Agaoglu published a work of profound philosophical and political significance like "In a country of free people" in the Republic of Turkey, where democracy was not yet fully established, clearly demonstrates how courageous and strong-willed a thinker he was, as well as the greatness of his personality and free thinking. In fact, Agaoglu, who was a free-thinking intellectual, tried to illuminate not only his own time but also the future with this work. In that treatise, he managed to define the basic principles and high goals of democracy, which had not yet been fully formed in certain directions even in Europe itself, and to convey them to the general public.

Historical facts show that the Western-style state structure based on republican governance, which Ahmed bey Agaoglu dreamed of throughout his life and described in his works, was the first to be achieved in the Eastern world by the Turkish nation - the Azerbaijani Turks. This independent state, of which the great thinker himself was a member and in which he operated – the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), unfortunately, was able to operate for only 23 months, but even during this short period of time, it managed to preserve the foundations of the republican system of governance and created the first democratic state in the region.

A deep analysis of the works of Ahmed bey Agaoglu shows that the thinker did not make any compromises on the fundamental principles of democracy, freedom of thought and liberty and showed unwavering loyalty to these ideals. His resolute position on these issues was especially evident during his time as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Agaoglu's principled statement that

"everything must have a critic" is a clear example confirming his constant support and defense of the institution of criticism, which is considered one of the most basic and necessary conditions of democracy. This statement reflects his belief in the importance of free criticism for the sustainable development and health of both the government and society.

Ahmed bey Agaoglu's work "In a country of free people" clearly demonstrates his broad erudition and deep philosophical knowledge. The fact that he mentions the names of a number of prominent figures of European literature and philosophy, such as John Locke, Kant, Voltaire, Bruno, Hegel, Machiavelli, Spencer, John Milton and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, proves that the thinker is closely acquainted with both their fundamental works and the progressive ideas they voiced. According to Agaoglu, literature, along with other areas, plays an important and indispensable role in the formation of nations and the achievement of democracy. In order to strengthen this thesis, he strengthens his opinion by listing the names of giants of world literature such as William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Jean-Baptiste Moliere, Victor Hugo, Dante Alighieri, Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and Leo Tolstoy in various places in his work. The thinker, emphasizing the importance of these individuals, sharply notes that "if it were not for these individuals, the English, German, French, Italian, and Russian nations could not have been created".

Thus, Ahmed bey Agaoglu tried to convincingly prove that writers and poets played a decisive role not only in the formation of culture, but also in the formation of national consciousness and nations.

The publication date and conditions of Ahmed bey Agaoglu's "In a country of free people" were not accidental, because this work was published about ten years after the collapse of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). This timing, in fact, arose from an important ideological necessity. Although the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic collapsed, in order to keep its ideals of independence alive and restore them in the future, the people needed not only patriotism, but also the ideas of leading intellectuals.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, a people who had lived under slavery for a long time, who did not fully understand the value of freedom and who oppressed each other due to internal conflicts, had a serious need for spiritual awakening and to establish an independent state again, free from the oppression of tyranny. According to the thinker, achieving this supreme goal could be possible only through the unity of ideas and ideology. In his work written for this very purpose, Ahmed bey Agaoglu interpreted the idea of democratic governance in close parallel with the idea of liberation from moral shackles, thereby showing that political freedom cannot be thought of separately from moral freedom.

One of the main theses of Ahmed bey Agaoglu's "In a country of free people" is that achieving freedom requires an extremely difficult and multifaceted struggle. According to the thinker, true freedom is not achieved simply by breaking external chains - that is, the shackles of political and physical slavery; on the contrary, freedom requires individuals to be free from internal chains as well - from internal defects, limitations and spiritual weaknesses. The author clearly lists the moral and governance principles that every member of society must adhere to in order to achieve and maintain this complete freedom. According to these principles, in order to achieve freedom, serious attention should be paid to the purity of thought, word and deed. At the same time, a person who wants to be free must avoid greed, be simple, truthful and courageous, but must resolutely refrain from being a liar, hypocrite, flatterer, informer and coward. This person should not harm others, should avoid deceit and destructive actions such as confusion, and should be able to defend his or her own rights. In addition to individual effort, a person who wants to achieve freedom should be hardworking, tolerant, and able to help. In the field of political freedom, the people should be governed by experienced individuals so that the freedom that has been achieved with difficulty is not lost again. In a country that has achieved freedom, transparency should be accepted as a basic principle, the activities of officials should be able to be checked by citizens at any time, and at the same time, everyone, regardless of their identity, should be ready to give an account of their work. Agaoglu declares that it is the duty of everyone, without exception, to comply with these listed moral and political norms [2, 26-27].

By bringing the principles and values listed above to the attention of the people, Ahmed bey Agaoglu tried to promote two main important ideas. First, he emphasized that freedom is not an easily obtained gift, but rather is earned at the cost of great difficulties and serious individual efforts. This aimed to instill in the people a belief in the value of freedom and the spirit of struggle necessary to achieve it. Second, he showed that the freedom and prosperity that Europe has achieved today, to a certain extent, were not easily achieved. Agaoglu noted that in the past, people in Europe also trampled on each other's rights, did not hesitate to shed blood, and went through a long and difficult path of development before reaching this democratic stage. These ideas clearly prove that Ahmed bey Agaoglu criticized the historical processes and shortcomings of the West in his writings and speeches, as well as the East.

This work, which is about the Azerbaijani thinker and describes the ideal democratic state model, was in fact an artistic embodiment of the people's ideals and aspirations. Agaoglu's main goal was to establish a form of government that was accountable to the people and under their constant control. He believed that such a state structure was the only guarantee of long-term national progress and freedom.

East-west comparison in "Three cultures". One of the works that reflects Ahmed bey Agaoglu's profound thoughts on democratic governance is his fundamental work "Three cultures", written during his years of exile in Malta (1919-1921) and published in 1927. In this work, the Azerbaijani thinker sharply expressed how destructive the system of personal power and loyalty to the individual had for society and the state, writing:

"But once the matter spills over into the realm of personal loyalty, flattery, hypocrisy, deceit, lies, intrigue, betrayal and crime take the place of merit and virtue for statesmen. The competitive state loses its dignity in good governance, knowledge, determination, perseverance and honor. Humiliation and disgrace pour in in the realm of personal loyalty. Instead of true intelligence, intelligence and virtue, cunning, deceit and fraud take the place of true wisdom, intelligence and virtue".

With this quote, Agaoglu dramatically showed how the construction of political governance on personal relationships encourages negative qualities within the state apparatus and how it pushes the principles of good governance – namely knowledge, dignity and honesty – into the background. The thinker proved that in conditions of attachment to the person, not true skill and virtue, but cunning and cunning come to the fore [4, 18-19].

In his work "Three cultures", Ahmed bey Agaoglu strongly emphasizes the idea of Westernization and states that a complete return to Islamic values is almost impossible. He notes that these values are in decline in the Islamic world and that changes in society confirm this irreversible process. Expanding his observations, the thinker draws attention to the fact that both men and women are already influenced by Western culture in their daily lives, thoughts and behaviors and are beginning to resemble it. Seeing the only way out of this situation in the complete assimilation of Western civilization, he puts forward a decisive proposal: "Western culture, with all its flaws and merits, must be accepted without discrimination. Our thinking, way of life and mentality must be absolutely adapted to the West". With these ideas, Agaoglu emphasizes that the path to progress and salvation of the Turkic-Muslim peoples lies in the full acceptance of science, technology and democratic values coming from the West [1, 17].

According to the fundamental view expressed by Ahmed bey Agaoglu in his work "Three cultures", Islamic civilization has faced a long-lasting crisis and difficulties. The thinker claims that this decline is irreversible and in this regard, he considers it extremely difficult or even impossible for Islamic civilization to restore its former power and influence, that is, to come to its senses. While explaining this position, Agaoglu emphasizes that the only way out and the possibility of progress for Muslim societies is to completely assimilate the principles of Western civilization. In other words, according to Agaoglu, the Islamic world has lost the power to overcome the current crisis with its own internal resources and the only way out is to radically Westernize.

While explaining the concept of statehood, Ahmed bey Agaoglu focuses on the fundamental principles of Western culture, which protect the rights and freedoms of people. When touching on the

topic of the progress of society, he emphasizes the historical importance of the Great French Revolution and, referring to the ideas of thinkers such as Voltaire, Kant, and Hegel, notes the role of these personalities in the formation of Western civilization.

In his work "Three cultures", Agaoglu comparatively analyzes the concepts of democracy, society, and the individual in two main contexts – the East and the West. As a result of this comparison, he definitely gives preference to Western civilization [11, 15].

In this fundamental work, the author discusses the three great civilizations known to the world and states that the Buddhist and Islamic cultures are collapsing. In contrast, he talks about the fact that Western culture, despite all the difficulties and internal contradictions, has survived and developed and, as a result, has acquired a dominant position in the world. In this way, Agaoglu sees the path to salvation for the peoples of the East in accepting the values of Western civilization [7, 11; 8, 464-466].

Thus, the progressive ideas put forward by Ahmed bey Agaoglu, one of the prominent figures of both Azerbaijani and Turkic history, in many cases, regardless of the time when they were voiced, were a hundred years ahead of the level of development of Azerbaijani society. His works and thoughts on topics such as democracy, Westernization, national unity and criticism are of great scientific relevance in terms of deeply studying the history of socio-political and cultural development of Turkic-Muslim countries. Therefore, it is extremely important to convey this valuable heritage to future generations. A comprehensive study of Agaoglu's scientific works by Azerbaijani historians, as well as the systematic teaching of his ideas in secondary and higher schools, is one of the most important issues for the formation of the national consciousness and democratic values of today's and future Azerbaijani society.

When closely familiarizing oneself with the life and work of Ahmed bey Agaoglu, one can observe that the years he spent in Paris played a decisive role in the formation of the thinker's worldview. During this period, he studied not only Western culture, but also Eastern culture in depth. Having lived directly in the West, he observed with his own eyes the fundamental differences between Eastern and Western civilizations. Agaoglu concentrated these differences on three main points [5, 72-109]: the "individual" is not developed in Eastern societies, the concept of "justice" is backward compared to the West, and there is no "democracy" in Eastern societies - Agaoglu emphasized that these three factors are closely related to each other: in the absence of democracy, the individual remains undeveloped, which in turn leads to the condemnation of the concepts of law and justice. In order to escape from this critical situation in which the Muslim-Turkish society found itself, Agaoglu was one of the most radical supporters of the "unconditional appropriation of European culture". In his opinion, the main values that constituted the essence of Western culture were liberalism and individual freedom. In his writings, the thinker stated that the concept of the West "is synonymous with liberal thought and individual freedom in particular" [8, 464-466]. Thus, Agaoglu considered the acceptance of not only technical, but also liberal ideological foundations of Western civilization by the Turkish peoples as a necessary condition.

Ahmed bey Agaoglu, as a Turkist, nationalist and great democrat, believed that the development and success of the Turkish nation and statehood would be realized precisely in democratic progress. For this reason, he considered democracy to be one of the necessary and inseparable conditions of nationalism. However, Agaoglu's political views underwent a certain evolution during his exile in Malta in 1919-1921, and during this period he began to give preference to social-democratic ideas. After his release from exile, the thinker wrote a letter to Nariman Narimanov, expressing his desire to return to his homeland, Azerbaijan. At the same time, he expressed his desire to fight for socialism in this letter. Explaining his new position in the letter, Agaoglu stated that Western democrats, especially the British, were trying to exploit not only the peoples of the East, but also the peoples of the West. This statement reinforced his sharp criticism of imperialism and explained the reason for his approach to socialist ideas [6, 78].

Ahmed bey Agaoglu summarized the main contradictions between Eastern and Western civilizations in three fundamental shortcomings: the "undeveloped individual", the concept of "backward justice" and the "absence of democracy".

Touching on these points, the well-known thinker Peyami Safa made the following comment in the context of the political realities of the time Agaoglu lived: "When he [Agaoglu] came to Istanbul for the second time after the Constitutional Monarchy, the dreamlike silence that astonished all freedom-lovers awaited him. Neither the reform efforts of Sultan Abdulhamid, nor the nominally existing parliaments (parliaments), nor the struggles between the Union and Progress-Liberty organizations, nor the Entente parties, could prevent the great and national disasters that that period faced".

Peyami Safa saw the reason for this failure not in democracy itself, but in the way it was implemented: "The fault was not in democracy, but perhaps in the great incompetence shown in its implementation". This idea, as Agaoglu also emphasized, confirmed the importance of not only theory, but also knowledgeable and skilled executors, that is, developed individuals, in order to achieve political ideals.

However, as the period of the Balkan Wars approached, Ahmed bey Agaoglu, like other Turkish nationalists, began to realize that the cause of the problems they faced was not only political factors, but also had deeper social roots. Being himself a child of a distant and enslaved Turkish world, he felt this truth more deeply and understood that the main essence of the struggle was precisely "Turkism" rather than a broad and abstract idea such as "humanity" [3, 441]. This strengthened his conviction that the salvation of the nation lay in prioritizing its own national identity and Turkish unity over common humanitarian values.

Conclusion. Ahmed bey Agaoglu was aware of the double standards and hypocrisy of European democrats. He knew deeply that these forces behaved justly towards their own nations, but displayed an exploitative and imperialist character towards other nations. For this reason, the thinker often repeated his warning, saying: "The West will never give up the principle of exploiting the Turkish nation in order to protect its capital". This sharp thought reflected Agaoglu's distrust of the West and the need to warn the Turkish people against their political intentions.

Ahmed bey Agaoglu was an extremely far-sighted and perspective-oriented personality, both in terms of nationalist and Turkist thoughts, and in terms of humanitarian and democratic views. He had a common denominator with the ideas of prominent Turkist intellectuals of the time, Ali Bey Huseynzade, Yusif Akchura and Ziya Gokalp, and was on the same ideological front with them. During his lifetime, Agaoglu started a widespread fire of protest against oppression and injustice in the name of democracy, democratic governance and freedom among many intellectuals of the country and in the newspapers he published. Thanks to his activities, these ideas were strengthened in the political consciousness of the Turkish-Muslim society. Agaoglu's deep and heartfelt approach to solving the problems he encountered in all his socio-political activities, not superficially, proves once again that he is a great personality, a principled intellectual and leader.

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ƏHMƏD BƏY AĞAOĞLU İRSİ: TÜRK DÜNYASINDA DEMOKRATİK İDARƏETMƏ ÇƏTİNLİKLƏRİNİN TARİXİ-SİYASİ TƏDQİQİ

Görkəmli mütəfəkkir Əhməd bəy Ağaoğlu Azərbaycan, Türkiyə və bütün Türk dünyasının inkişafında dərin iz buraxmış şəxsiyyətdir. Onun fəaliyyətinin əsasını demokratiya, türkçülük və qərbçilik ideyalarının sintezi təşkil edirdi. Ağaoğlu türk-müsəlman xalqlarının tərəqqisini bu dəyərlərdə və maariflənmədə görürdü. "Sərbəst insanlar ölkəsində" kimi əsərləri ilə o, utopik olsa da, qanunlara, fərdi azadlığa və hesabatlılığa əsaslanan ideal cəmiyyət modelini təsvir edirdi. O, azadlığın yalnız zahiri deyil, həm də batini zəncirləri qırmaqla mümkün olduğunu vurğulayırdı. Ağaoğlu Şərqdəki problemlərin kökünü "inkişaf etməmiş fərd", "geri qalmış ədalət" və "demokratiyanın yoxluğu"nda görür, bu böhrandan çıxış yolunu isə Qərb mədəniyyətinin qeydsiz-şərtsiz mənimsənilməsində görürdü. Onun ideyaları öz dövrünü qabaqlayaraq, milli-demokratik şüurun formalaşmasına misilsiz töhfələr vermişdir.

Açar sözlər: Əhməd bəy Ağaoğlu, islam millətçiliyi, türkçülük, "Sərbəst insanlar ölkəsində", "Üç mədəniyyət".

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НАСЛЕДИЕ АХМЕД БЕК АГАОГЛУ: ИСТОРИКО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ СЛОЖНОСТЕЙ ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКОГО УПРАВЛЕНИЯ В ТЮРКСКОМ МИРЕ

Выдающийся мыслитель Ахмед бек Агаоглу – личность, оставившая глубокий след в развитии Азербайджана, Турции и всего тюркского мира. Основой его деятельности был синтез идей демократии, тюркизма и западничества. Агаоглу видел прогресс тюрко-мусульманских народов в этих ценностях и просвещении. В таких произведениях, как «В стране свободных людей», он описал идеальную, хотя и утопическую, модель общества, основанного на законах, индивидуальной свободе и ответственности. Он подчёркивал, что свобода возможна не только путём разрыва внешних, но и внутренних оков. Агаоглу видел корень проблем Востока в «неразвитой личности», «отсталой справедливости» и «отсутствии демократии» и видел выход из этого кризиса в безусловном усвоении западной культуры. Его идеи, опередившие своё время, внесли беспрецедентный вклад в формирование национально-демократического сознания.

Ключевые слова: Ахмед бек Агаоглу, исламский национализм, тюркизм, «В стране свободных людей», «Три культуры».

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