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# PECOB'S VOLUMES

The rise of political  
extremism in Bulgaria –  
The political party “Ataka”

Igor Novaković

MIREES

Interdisciplinary Master's East European Research and Studies  
Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna

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Igor Novaković



To my family

-Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts-  
Sir Winston Churchill

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## Summary

The aim of the thesis is to depict the phenomenon of the rise of the political extremism in Bulgaria after the year 2005, represented in the political party “Ataka”. The phenomenon itself is closely related to the appearance of populist discourses, after the victory of former tsar of Bulgaria, Simeon Saksoburgotski, and his party at the Parliamentary elections in 2005.

Hence, the objects of the analysis are the specific conditions which allowed the appearance of the phenomenon, thus the presentation of the analytical profile of the party itself. More specifically, the research should provide an answer about the ideological positioning of the party and its relation to the phenomenon of populism.

The research resulted in broad analyses of the characteristics of the party: the analyses of the party’s programme, inner structure and leadership and electorate. Also, the subject of analyses was its cooperation with the other parties on the domestic and international scene, in the context of self-identification of Ataka on the right-left political continuum.

The results showed that Ataka is a particular manifestation of the populist political logic, which is embodied within the extreme right political discourse. The causes of its appearance are various, but they can be sublimated under the label of the by-products of the Bulgarian transition.

## Keywords

Keywords: Populism, Political Extremism, Far Right Parties, Bulgarian Party System

## 1. - Introduction

At the Parliamentary elections in 2005, a coalition with a colourful name – “Ataka” (Attack) led by Volen Siderov, one of the most controversial journalists in Bulgaria, unexpectedly entered the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria breaching the threshold of 4%. The surprise was even greater since this coalition was a proponent of a totally opposite political ideology that all other parliamentary parties had. “Ataka” was criticizing the transition path as a whole, from 1997 onwards, as wrong and dangerous for the very existence of Bulgarian nation and state. Moreover, their statements were bursting with xenophobic references towards the Bulgarian Turks and Roma.

How was it possible that one extreme right party managed to become parliamentary, especially if we take into consideration that the Bulgarian political party system was regarded by scholars and international politicians as one of the most stable in whole of Eastern Europe? How is it possible that xenophobic and racist ideas broke to the political surface in the only country in Southeastern Europe (without Albania and Greece) which did not experience ethnic conflicts and tensions after 1990? And how did it happen that the appearance of such a party occurred practically at the end of the transition process, less than year and a half before the accession of the country to the European Union?

This research addresses the phenomenon of “Ataka”’s appearance on the Bulgarian political scene.

### The main objective of the thesis and research tasks

The main objective of the thesis is to analyze the emergence of populism and political extremism in Bulgaria with the rise of the political party “Ataka”. The question which lies before us is how did it happen that the extreme right political ideas did not arise immediately after the fall of communism in the country? In other countries of Eastern Europe far right discourse was present, in larger or smaller scope. The first period of fragile democracy at the beginning of transition was usually bursting with different political options. In Bulgaria, the period of fragile democracy was characterized by a relative political stability – the dominant cleavage was between the former communist and heterogeneous right coalition, with the existence of a small Turkish minority party in between. Indeed, some ideas which could be considered as extreme existed in the right part of the political scene, but they were overrun by the mainstream moderate right ideology. Thus, the political space for the appearance of an extreme populist party



was much narrower than in the other countries - all early attempts to found such a party were rather unsuccessful. What lay behind the rise of political extremism after the political system of Bulgaria was finally shaped, was what professor Antony Todorov called, “*European standards in the party system*” (adaptation of the dominant models of party organization and adopting of the dominant differentiation of the party families in the EU<sup>1</sup>)? Hence, the objective is to analyze the conditions which caused the uprise of extreme right political discourse hostile to all the achievements of Bulgarian political and economic transition.

The second objective is to define and present analytical profile of this party, based on different methods of approach to the subject.

For the successful analysis of this phenomenon, the main concepts of populism and political extremism have to be defined. Consequently, the first part of this paper is devoted to the presentation of the definitions of these concepts, in order to create a suitable basis for the analysis and presentation of the party’s profile. Ergo, I shall firstly introduce the main **research tasks** which will help define the main characteristics of this phenomenon:

1. Political extremism and populism are usually products of a peculiar political situation in a country, mostly when there is some general dissatisfaction with the political or/and economic situation in the country. Only in such a political environment is it possible to expect the appearance of the extreme alternative to the mainstream political framework. Therefore, the first task should be to define those specific conditions in the Bulgarian political and social framework which were the cornerstones for the appearance of the phenomenon. Thus, there should be a significant part of national electorate willing to accept extreme political discourse, this broadens our task to the identification of the profile of “Ataka”’s voters.

2. The self-identification of the party is happening in two dimensional levels: programmatic and practical. The programme of one party is its imagined self-identification, explaining the reasons for its existence. With the analysis of the main goals that party wants to achieve, it is possible to classify the party according to the standard typology of political parties, on the left-right political continuum. The discourse analysis of the party’s programmatic platform is necessary in order to define its main characteristics.

Second type of self-identification is happening also through a practical dimension, due to the fact that every political party differentiates itself from the other players in the game. To come back to the issue of the left-right political continuum - the ideological position of one party could be defined in the best way by comparing it to other political parties in the parliament and by analyzing their cooperation.

Third type of self-identification happens on the supra-national level, i.e. through its membership in some of the EU party federations or cooperation in the European

<sup>1</sup> Antony Todorov, “The Evolution of the Post-Communist Bulgarian Party System”, in Maya Getova, Ahmend Nazmi Uste (Eds.), *The Impact of European Union: Case of Bulgaria, Case of Turkey*, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, 2007, p. 125

Parliament. This cooperation defines party’s political and ideological characteristics.

3. Thirdly, it is also important to outline a party’s structure and its ways of functioning. Different types of political parties have different models for inner functioning. For extreme (and) populist parties the usual characteristic is that it is almost completely dependent on its leader. Thus, the analysis of the internal organization of the party would tell us more about the real influence of the leader in the party and party’s dependency on him. Also, the analysis of the political and social activity of the leader would give more data about the possible correlation party = leader.

4. Fourthly, the analysis of the party’s activity from its founding to the present date would also tell us much more about their political engagement and give a picture of practical repercussions of their ideological standpoints.

5. Fifth task would be to analyze the writings of the paper media under the editorial control of “Ataka”, and compare it to the writings of the other media. This analysis would help in a better understanding of the type of message that “Ataka” is sending to its electorate, and if and how it curves the reality to be in accordance with their ideology.

6. The last research task would be to compare this party to the similar parties from the region. “Ataka” is a party which comes from Southeastern Europe, hence for the analysis of the phenomenon it is not enough to compare it with similar parties from Western Europe. Regarding the specific history and the transition development of the region, it would be proper to compare this party also with some of the similar parties from Western Europe.

## Methodology

The methodology used in the thesis is complex – combining the theoretical advantages from works about phenomena of populism and political extremism and research results produced by using several methods:

- Political analysis – is based on the qualitative analysis of “Ataka”’s political discourse expressed in the programmatic documents, party’s activity and political engagement of its leader and with reflexivity to the theory. Sources of analysis are found in the official Documents of “Ataka” (Programmes and Statute) Bulgarian daily newspaper and weekly magazines, as well as published books of the leader of the party (“Boomerang of Evil” and “My battle for Bulgaria”)

- Interviews with experts and politicians: When it comes to the selection of the interviewees, the aim was to get a sample of the political actors from “Ataka”, and

scholars from the New Bulgarian University who were engaged in the analysis of the phenomenon itself, or closely related topics. All the interviews were semi-structured, with open type of questions. Interviewed persons were asked to give their opinion about the reasons for the appearance of „Ataka” on the political scene of Bulgaria, and series of specific questions related to their personal interest regarding the phenomenon, in order to express their independent opinion. In the interview with Anton Sirakov, a much more comprehensive approach was taken, due to the fact that he was able to explain, from the first hand, programmatic components of “Ataka”’s identity and its development. The transcriptions of the conducted interviews, translated to English language, can be found in the Appendix 4.

1. Anton Sirakov, lawyer from Sofia, the Deputy President of the political party “Ataka”

2. Momchil Badzakov, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Political Sciences, New Bulgarian University

3. Antony Todorov, , PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Political Sciences, New Bulgarian University

4. Vladimir Shopov, former employee of “Alpha research” - Agency for market and social research and the founder of the Agency “Sofia Analytica”

5. Mihail Ivanov, PhD, Department of Political Sciences, New Bulgarian University. The councilor on ethnic questions of the former president of the Republic of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev

- Discourse analysis of the printed media – is based on the comparative analysis of the newspaper issued by the political party “Ataka” and weekly magazine for politics and economy Kapital. In the analysis, numbers issued in three different periods of one month during 2006-2007 were included.

- Comparative analysis – compared with the similar party from the region, the Serbian Radical Party on the various range of issues: background, programme and ideology, structure, development etc.

## The Structure

The thesis is divided in the two main chapters: Theoretical Framework, The rise of political extremism in Bulgaria – the political party “Ataka”.

In the chapter *Theoretical Framework* the theoretical skeleton of the paper based on theories of populism and right wing political extremism is given, as it is presented

in the books of Ernesto Laclau and Piero Ignazi, *On Populist Reason* and *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*. In the thesis, the works of notable Bulgarian scholars like Antony Todorov, Georgi Karasimeonov, Svetislav Malinov, Ivan Krastev, Anna Krasteva and Evgenija Ivanova were used.

The main body of the text, *The rise of political extremism in Bulgaria – the political party “Ataka”*, is divided into nine sub chapters in the following order:

- Political and social background** – in this sub chapter the key issues in the recent development of Bulgaria, which were crucial for the appearance of “Ataka” on the political scene are explained.

- Programme of “Ataka”** – analysis in a reflexive manner of the key issues from the programmatic documents of “Ataka”.

- Structure and Leadership of “Ataka”** – analysis of the statutory structure of “Ataka” and the role of its leader.

- Development of the “Ataka” 2005-2007** – the presentation and analysis of the critical issues in the history of the party..

- Electorate of “Ataka”** – presentation of the profile of “Ataka”’s voters.

- “Ataka” and the Bulgarian political scene** - in this sub chapter the relation of “Ataka” and other important parties in Bulgaria is explained.

- The international cooperation** is analyzing the cooperation of “Ataka” with the extreme right parties from Western Europe

- “Ataka” in comparative perspective** – comparative analysis of “Ataka” with the Serbian Radical Party

- Media images** – comparative discourse analysis of the daily newspaper *Ataka* and weekly magazine *Kapital*

## Expected results

1. Regarding the main objective of the research, the expected results should be the following:

2. Formulation of those specific conditions which caused the appearance of “Ataka” on the political scene of Bulgaria.



3. The definition of the ideological and political background of the party, thus defining of its position on the right-left political continuum, and creating the parallels with the extreme right parties from Western Europe.

4. Presentation of the analytical profile of the party regarding its formal structure and power relations between the party representatives and the role of the political discourse of “Ataka” on the political scene.

5. The prospectives of “Ataka” for the future.

## Risks of the study

This thesis does not cover the whole spectrum of populism in Bulgaria, but concentrates only on “Ataka”. “Ataka” came as the second wave of populism, after the first one caused by the appearance of the former tsar on the political scene, Simeon Saksoburgotski and his party in 2001. Third wave of the Bulgarian populism is led by the current mayor of Sofia and the front man of the party Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov. These three waves represent three different types of populism that pledge a larger study of the whole phenomenon which would cover all the aspects of the Bulgarian populism at the beginning of the XXI century.

A second theoretical challenge is the analysis of a party which exists for only three years. Usually it is perceived that one party is established at the moment when it passes at least three national electoral terms (Parliamentary elections). During this time, “Ataka” passed three (even four if we count the presidential elections) electoral terms which were finished relatively successfully, but the party did not have a chance to find itself in the ruling majority. In that case we would have much clearer picture about the party’s profile and its capabilities.

Thirdly, the area of populism and political extremism is not very popular among scholars. The comprehensive studies are rare, and there is a lack of literature on populism in Eastern Europe, an area which has a quite different background than the countries of Western Europe. The absence of sufficient literature can cause the lack of theoretical details important for the profile for this party.

## 2. - Theoretical Framework

The right wing political extremism and populism are two close phenomena, which are intercepting, but their connotations are different. Extreme right parties do not comply always with the populist methodology of political behavior and populism is not necessarily of the extreme right type - populism does not have to be extreme at all. In this chapter main concepts of these two political terms will be outlined, with a special attention paid to the interception of the two discourses.

### 2.1 - Populism

The phenomenon of populism is hard to trace and describe by its symptomatic characteristics. Simply, a wide range of political discourses have been called populist. A whole range of regimes of different ideological background were unanimously considered populist. Even today, different leaders of different countries are considered as such, just to mention some of them: the current president of Venezuela Hugo Chaves, the prime minister of Italy Silvio Berlusconi and others. Such examples imply that populism cannot be considered as an ideology, nor that there is something ideological within it.

Historically, populism originates from the American populism and the Russian *Narodniki* movement, both dating from the XIX century. Margaret Canovan made a distinction of different kinds of populisms. Firstly, she divided phenomena of populisms into two categories: Agrarian and Political for Canovan, Agrarian populism was a characteristic of the two mentioned movements and also the “green rising” (agrarian political discourse) in Eastern Europe between the two world wars. Political populism comprises the populist dictatorship (e.g. Peron), populist democracy (i.e. calls for referendums and participation), reactionary populism (e.g George Wallace and his followers) and politicians’ populism (i.e. broad non-ideological coalition-building that draws on the unificatory appeal of the people)<sup>2</sup>. In that sense, it is possible to conclude that the meaning of populism, as an ideology, is completely lost. Even today, different kinds of regimes represent themselves as adherents of different ideologies, yet their

methods of political struggle and rule are amazingly similar.

The main theoretician of the phenomena of populism, Ernesto Laclau, refers to it as a kind of **specific political logic** – a system of rules drawing a horizon within which some objects are representable while others are excluded<sup>3</sup>. This type of specific political logic is constituted during the process of social change, when a global political subject is formed, thus bringing together a plurality of social demands within its discourse. The result is a construction of internal frontiers and institutionalization of the significant “other”<sup>4</sup>. So, populism is not a rigid concept to which we could easily assign certain objects, but the establishment of an area of variations within which a plurality of phenomena could be inscribed<sup>5</sup>. In his book *On Populist Reason*, Ernesto Laclau gave complex theoretical inquiry of the phenomenon, through employing various scientific approaches. For the purpose of the thesis, it will be enough just to outline some basic traits.

As said above, Laclau defined populism as a specific political logic, which is extracting one side of social demands and creating a specific set of political goals whose essence is based on the construction of the “people” or significant us, and the enemy or potential threat to the “people” or significant “them”. In other words, populism requires the dichotomic division – where one part presents itself, the representative of the whole society<sup>6</sup> - if all the people are perceived as *populus* (the body of all citizens), and the *plebs* is its (self identified) underprivileged part. Then the essence of populism, according to Laclau, is the self-identification of *plebs* as the whole *populus*, a group which wants to function as the totality of the community. Hence, what is needed for the constitution of populist movement is the construction of a global identity out of the equivalence of a plurality of social demands<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, Laclau expresses a standpoint that there is a thin line between the right-wing and left-wing populism. In short, Laclau determined that in the cases when the main political subject, which uses populist rhetoric, becomes a part of the mainstream politics or pacts with them, it is possible that a part of its electorate keeps the need for a protest vote. In that case, it is not odd if that part of electorate shifts itself towards the completely ideologically opposite political stream, but which still presents the protest political discourse.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, the populist identity is constructed on the use of an equivalential chain of demands which *has* to be expressed through the cathexis of *one* singular element – abstract common feature underlying all social grievances, but with performative operation constituting the chain as such<sup>9</sup>. This presumes the usage of empty symbols or

3 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit.,p.117

4 Ernesto Laclau,opt.cit,pp. 117-118

5 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit.,p. 175

6 Ernesto Laclau,opt.cit,p. 83

7 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit., pp.

8 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p.87 (81-83 Laclau presented a whole range of historical examples. Look p.135 and p.88)

9 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p. 97

terms, like “justice” or “freedom”, which are being attributed to the chain – thus being filled with particular set of concrete political meanings and used in political discourse.

Fourthly, the populist identification is happening on rather heterogeneous social terrain. Hence, it is much more difficult to determine both the popular forces (i.e. Who are we?) and the enemy (i.e. Who are them?). The result is employing of political messages which are often characterized with epithets “vagueness” and “imprecision”<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, populism is regarded as a kind of a low level politics for acquiring more support. As Ivan Krastev outlined, “in the current debate, *populism* is mainly associated with an emotional, simplistic and manipulative discourse directed at “feelings” of the people, or with opportunistic policies aimed at “buying support”<sup>11</sup>. For both Laclau and Krastev, populism is not just a simplistic political appeal which is playing with the emotions of the masses; it is much more than that. It is the “very essence of political”<sup>12</sup> - which is being manifested in such a way due to the specific broad goals and specific group that is being appealed. Therefore, the political message of the populists has to be to an extent “imprecise”. Only in the cases when there is a highly institutionalized society, equivalential logic have less terrain to operate, thus the populist rhetoric becomes a kind of commodity lacking any sort of hegemonic depth - than populism does indeed become synonymous with petty demagogy<sup>13</sup>.

Fifthly, for Laclau populism presents itself both as *subversive* of the existing state of things and as the starting point for more or less *radical* reconstruction of a new order whenever the previous one has been shaken. The institutional system has to be (more or less) broken if the populist appeal is to be effective<sup>14</sup>. Hence, the author made a distinction between the possible manifestations of populism:

- *A largely self-structured institutional system which relegates to a marginal position in any anti-institutional challenge – that is to say, the latter’s ability to constitute equivalential chains is minimal.*
- *The system is less well structured, and requires some kind of periodical recomposition. ....The system can be challenged, but since its ability is still considerable, the populist forces have to operate both as “insiders” and “outsiders”*
- *The system has entered a period of “organic crises” in the Gramscian sense. In that case, the populist forces challenging it have to do more than engage themselves in the ambiguous position of subverting the system and, at the same time, being integrated*

10 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. pp. 97-98

11 Ivan Krastev, “The Populist Moment”, in Eurozine Journal, September 2007, p 2

12 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit., 231

13 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p. 191

14 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p. 177

*into it; they have to reconstruct the nation around a new popular core. Here, the reconstructive task prevails over the subversion.*<sup>15</sup>

Laclau identifies the prevailing system in the world as the "globalized capitalism"- not capitalism as a purely economic reality, but as a complex in which economic, political, military, technological and other determinations – each endowed with its own logic and certain autonomy- enter into the determination of the movement as a whole<sup>16</sup>. Then populism is important as a modern reaction and challenge to a liberal representative democracy, and its following phenomena perceived together as the "globalized capitalism". It is obvious that populism is not just a phenomenon which could happen in immature democratic society, but a serious and systemic challenge that stands as an alternative for the modern representative liberal democratic system, moreover as an alternative to the modern process of political and economic globalization.

According to the above said, it is possible to summarize the general characteristics of the modern populisms which will later be used in the work:

1. **Populism is a specific kind of a political logic**, a way of behaving and creating the discourses which presume the usage of **dichotomous relation "us versus them"**, where "us" is the category represented by the populists.

2. An appeal to the people or the nation as a whole, against the corrupted and impotent political elites using the unequivocal chain of demands transcended into singular political message. Although the populists make an appeal "in the name of all people" using dichotomous discourse (us versus them), the appeal is made on behalf of one, quite heterogeneous, part of the society which identifies itself with the populist message. Thus, the "people" in the populist discourse are a constructed category.

3. The unique characteristic of populists is the protest vote and negating, partially or in total, the present system of political representation. Due to this characteristic, it is relatively easy to have the ideological transformation of one part of the populist electorate, i.e. from left to right and vice versa.

4. Populists challenge, in smaller or bigger scale, some of the characteristics of the post-industrial society like supra-nationalism, globalization, sexual freedoms etc. In the modern context, populism is not a petty demagogy but a serious challenge to the dominant system in the world, which Ernesto Laclau has described as "globalized capitalism". Yet, this challenge remains mostly on the national level.

5. A characteristic of the modern populisms in Europe is an appeal against minorities

15 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p. 178

16 Ernesto Laclau, opt.cit. p. 230

that are privileged on the expense of the people<sup>17</sup>- so called "scapegoat tactics" This characteristic can be considered just as one segment of the extreme populisms – a scapegoat discourse about "distinctive one" who is guilty for "the misery of a common man".

### 2.1.1 - Populism in Eastern Europe

For better understanding of populism in Bulgaria, it would be proper to say something about the phenomena of populisms in general in Eastern Europe. For this purpose I shall use the paper of Dieter Segert presented on the scientific conference on populism, held on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2008. in Sofia, Bulgaria. The paper is mainly concentrated on the phenomena of populisms in Central Eastern Europe, but it could be useful for the topic, since Bulgaria is sharing similar historical experience. In the countries of Central Eastern Europe populism became one of the leading political streams in various incarnations: from pro-democratic and pro-western to extreme parties.

Segert identified the roots of the new breed of populism in consequences of the communist rule in these countries and the consequences of the transition process. He outlined that communist rule was a developmental dictatorship, the instrument of a modernization process for underdeveloped regions<sup>18</sup>. As such, the process of development under communism resulted in the high investment in human capital, because of the needed new elite, which would eventually be a cornerstone of the future "society of equality and progress". More or less, because of this process, the countries of Central Eastern Europe did not fall into the crises without foreseeable end when the transition process started. On the other hand, parts of the elite, which were not dogmatically tied to the system, used their privileged position, in the beginning of transition process, to overtake privileged positions in the new system. The process resulted in their enrichment while the rest of the citizens faced sudden impoverishment, in manner which some scholars are comparing to the results of the Great Depression in 1920s<sup>19</sup>.

The initial demands of the people during the last days of communism were directed against the *lack of political freedoms and declining political efficiency, but not against the communist welfare system*<sup>20</sup>. During the transition proces the political freedoms and, to an extent, economic efficiency were achieved, but the welfare state diminished

17 Ivan Krastev, opt.cit., p. 4

18 Dieter Segert, Populism in East Central Europe – a legacy of State Socialism, presented on the International scientific conference on populism, Red House, Sofia, 2008, p. 3

19 Dieter Segert, opt.cit. p. 4

20 Dieter Segert, opt.cit.,p. 5



from the lives of the majority of citizens. The gap between the rich and the rest was so deep that some people *started to cast doubt on a system of political freedom that neglects long-term political equilibrium*<sup>21</sup>. Thus, the new political elite was perceived as the winner of the economic transformation of the country. The fact that democratic institutions and political parties remained weak showed that it is relatively easy to control the political system for personal interest of one or few groups. Therefore, a discourse which questioned and attacked this out-turn of events, which “caused people to pay terrifying economic prices just to see one layer of society becoming richer” could have been expected, due to the fact that democratic change did not improve the social status of the majority of population. Populist methodology in variety of political discourses was a consequence. The appearance of charismatic leaders, strong personalities, who would eventually break up with the system which showed its incapability to work in the interest of the people as a whole.

To summarize, Segert suggested several causes for the appearance of populism:

- transition which was carried on the expense of the majority of population, while political elites got wealthier – instead of promised economic progress .
- destruction of the communist welfare system, but without introduction of a new model.
- general dissatisfaction in performance of representative democratic institutions and mediators, especially political parties seen as the “essence of corruption”.

This out-turn of events is a characteristic of all four countries of Central Eastern Europe – regarding the fact that they had crossed similar transition pathway. It remains to be seen how this pattern complies with South East European countries.

## 2.2 - Right wing political extremism

### 2.2.1 - Political extremism

The term Political Extremism is usually used to describe the stream of political activity which is distanced from the mainstream political ideas, in a given period, by its ideology and methods of political activity. The history of political extremism rises with the first appearance of the democratic environment in politics during XVII and XVIII century. In today’s Europe, under the term political extremism, mainly the ideas

21 Dieter Segert, opt.cit.,p. 6

connected to communism and fascism are presumed. Although these two ideologies lost their grounds in practical application (i.e. did not survive the test of history) the terms neo-fascism and neo-communism were used to describe movements and parties which were keeping the nostalgia alive. Moreover, with the transformation of the Western Societies the notion of the term was extended to the new type of political parties, which, as Piero Ignazi in his book *Extreme right parties in Western Europe* outlined, appeared at the beginning of 1980s. On the other hand, left wing political extremism is practically non-existent. In other words, communism dissolved slowly and crumbled within itself, and consequently no significant extreme left alternative appeared on the political scene of European states. In the Eastern Europe former communist parties transformed, to an extent, to modern socialist and social-democratic parties, without claiming the heritage or methods of political activity from the previous period.

In the following text the main theoretical standpoints about modern extreme right in the contemporary European politics will be discussed.

What is modern extreme right?

In the following text the genesis of the political right through history should not be under debate. What is important for our subject are the sources of the contemporary extreme right in Europe. Firstly, we shall see what “right wing politics” represents in modern politics.

Ignazi started his polemics about the modern extreme right parties with the question what does left-right dichotomy represent today? He outlined that classical connotation of the right-left cleavage has mutated, thus bringing the new notions to both parts of political spectrum. The classical class cleavage became increasingly blurred with the introduction of the new patterns of life after the World War II. Here the thesis of Ronald Inglehart becomes important, who expressed an opinion about a new kind of cleavage between **materialist** (the defense of socio-economic achievements and law and order enforcements) and **post-materialist values** (the drive to participate more in decision-making process and to enjoy more freedom). Hence, the focus is set on the clash of the **Old Politics** (the defense of interests and values interwoven with the traditional cleavages) and the **New Politics** (non-material issues such as quality of life, the role of women, minority rights, social equality, protection of environment etc)<sup>22</sup>. The class notion of the right-left dichotomy slowly vanishes, while new aspects are being introduced.

Moreover, according to the “essentialist” interpretation of the dichotomy, the right is giving more attention to the differences while the left is trying to highlight the common traits among man<sup>23</sup>. Thus, for the right, it is much more important to emphasize the importance of collective identities – the nation, the State, the Church, but also of the tradition and roots, order, societal harmony, hierarchy, the transposition on the socio-political context of the natural and social inequalities, the need for affiliation and the

22 Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2006, Oxford, p. 5

23 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 10

nostalgic search for natural community<sup>24</sup>.

For the concept of modern extreme right it is important to explain the denotation of its historical predecessor – fascism. Fascism (as an ideology and movement) is a genuine product of the XX century. It is an essential patchwork built on different and even contrasting materials<sup>25</sup>. As first, its primal goal is to establish a new kind of order based on the organic unity of the people, state and leader. In every sense it denies products of liberalism and materialism. As Emilio Gentile underlined, fascism is a clear and brutal opposition to freedom, equality, happiness and peace as life ideals<sup>26</sup>. And of course, the methods for claiming the power and rule are extremist and violent.

However, the phenomenon of fascism was based in specific conditions that were present after the World War I. As Ignazi outlined, the source of fascism is the outcome of the Industrial revolution<sup>27</sup> - the peak of the radical conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working class. In other words, fascism is the right wing antipode of communism - as an answer to the industrial and mass society<sup>28</sup>.

Not to go deep into the theory, it is enough to say that with the change of the meaning of the right-left dichotomy, there was no more suitable ground for the fascist ideology. The post-industrial society wiped out the traditional focus, thus offering new scope of goals for the right and eventually extreme right parties.

### 2.2.2 - Extreme right in Western Europe – post material extreme right

Extreme right is a political stream which differs from the moderate right in highlighting those issues perceived as contrast to the achievements of modern society. In other words, extreme parties are those which are situated on the most far right part of the political spectre. But that does not necessarily mean that these parties are “by default” neo-fascists or genealogical successors of fascism.

Indeed, the post-World War II extreme right parties were predominantly of neo-fascist type, built by the former members or the ideological successors of fascism. But, except in some minor cases, these parties remained on the margins of political life of West European societies.

The new extreme right parties are the phenomena that appeared in the late

24 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 12

25 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 16

26 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 20

27 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 34

28 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 83

XX century, with introducing of the post-industrial society. According to Ignazi the development of the service sector, the decline of the capability of labour relations to determine social relations, and the process of atomization and secularization have all nurtured different cleavages and aggregation<sup>29</sup>. The allocation of resources was not, any more, the primal motive for political struggle. The immigration of workers from the foreign countries, the weakening of traditional social relations in the society, weakening of the Nation State are just some of the issues addressed by the new extreme right.

Therefore, new parties emerged on the ideology which is a patchwork of different, sometimes contrasting issues. Their demands, as Ignazi outlined, can be sublimated in following:

***The new demands and needs converge in the defense of the natural community, from alien and polluting presences – hence racism and xenophobia – and respond to the identity crisis produced by atomization of society at the societal level, by globalization at the economic level, and by supranationalism on political level. Moreover, in the society where traditional social bonds are endangered by self-achievement and individualism pushed parts of societal strata to express desire for more authoritative guide which is mirrored in demand for more law and order, the search for a “charismatic leader” and uneasiness with representative mechanisms and procedures. But none of these new extreme parties expresses a desire for corporatist architecture of society or some kind of “new order”, like it was the case with fascism, but rather to a mixture, often dazzling and fallacious, of free enterprise and social protection<sup>30</sup>.***

Ignazi pointed out that this group of parties is the unexpected outcome of post-materialism; hence their label is the “**post-material**” extreme right.

Is it possible that this label “post-material” extreme right is applicable to the phenomenon of “Ataka”, regarding the fact that Bulgaria had a different type of development after the 1945, and that post-materialism was introduced with the process of transition in 1990s? Has this “time cleavage” produced some other peculiar aspects which are unknown in western societies, thus created different scope of interest for the East European extreme right parties? Until now there was no comprehensive study of the extreme right in Eastern Europe, and the theoretical standpoints produced by Ignazi and others could be the only possible marker in this research since West European extreme right parties are certainly “most similar to” “Ataka”. It is possible to give a suggestion for crucial common characteristics of these parties, according to Ignazi:

29 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 34

30 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 34

1. demand for more “law and order”
2. defense of the natural community impersonated in the Nation State
3. defense from alien factors that are polluting natural community, like immigrants and *geistarbeiters*
4. defense of traditional societal bonds
5. defense of the traditional economy from the process of globalization
6. against supra-nationalization (in this case personified in the EU) and the protection of the national sovereignty
7. search for a “charismatic” leader which would establish more direct link with the people
8. criticizing of the representative mechanisms and procedures – offering more direct system of representation
9. theory of conspiracy – usually against the natural entity: nation, people, state, racial group etc.
10. not necessarily – a proposal for the mixed system of free enterprise and social protection

From everything said, the distinction between these two phenomena is quite clear. Extreme right is an ideology, blurred, but with some clear distinctions about its characteristics. On the other hand populism is more a sum of methods for political struggles and the way of political behavior. There are some common points: search for a charismatic leader, scapegoat discourse in political rhetoric, challenge to the mainstream political system etc. But the extreme right offers much more regarding the political issues and ideology.

### 3. - The rise of political extremism in Bulgaria – the political party “Ataka”

#### 3.1 - Social and political background of the phenomenon

At the moment when “Ataka” appeared, the transition project was near its end: market economy was established, the privatization of the state enterprises was done, and democracy and civil society were strengthened. In 2004 Bulgaria became a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (further in the text NATO), and it was expected that in 2007 the country would become a member of the European Union (further in the text EU). At that particular moment, beyond all expectation, “Ataka” managed to enter the parliament. Their rhetoric encompassed the radical critique of the achieved, of ruling political elites and breaching of political correctness. Question which remains is which social and political conditions allowed “Ataka” to appear? In the following text I shall try to identify those key factors which helped the upraise of populism and extreme nationalism in Bulgaria. Firstly, there is dissatisfaction with by-products of the transition process. Secondly, the phenomenon was also influenced by by-products of the Bulgarian ethnic model. Thirdly, the new political behaviour in populist manner was introduced by the victory of Simeon Saksoburgotski and his party at the parliamentary elections 2001. And finally, the influence that the media had on shaping of the Bulgarian political scene,

#### 3.1.1 - Transition process in Bulgaria– the outcomes

The post communist transition period in Bulgaria is possible to divide into two separated transition projects. **First transition project** happened after the downfall of communism in the country. Electorate and political elite, represented by the reformed communists – the Bulgarian Socialist Party (further in the text BSP) and the opposition coalition – the United Democratic Forces (further in the text UDF) showed reluctance to radical reforms, according to the models applied in the other countries from Eastern Europe. Afraid of radical, unjust and painful economic and political transformation, the



elite opted declaratively for a compromise model, comprising a gradual change which would prevent sudden impoverishment of the majority of population. The result of this choice was a distraction from the goals of economic change and setting of the focus to political change. As mentioned before, political elite was trapped in deep ideological cleavage, *communism versus anti-communism*. Ruling party, the BSP, was desperately trying to stay in power, thus blurring the perception of reality with declarative promises for reform and better life. On the other hand, the opposition was more interested to "settle the account" with the former communists, and to have a historic revenge for 45 years of communist rule. Intentions of the one part of the UDF's elite became obvious during short governance of this party in 1992-1993, which could be described merely as a period of "witch hunting", trough processing of former communist leadership. The BSP's return to power meant the continuation of the previous politics, which ended with deep economic crisis in 1996-1997. First transition project ended in the citizens' protests. It became clear that there are no products of proposed gradual change, and that fast reforms must be implemented. Opposition parties, led by the reformed UDF and its new prominent leader, got a mandate in 1997 to put a new wave of reforms into practice.

It is important to mention one other product of the first transition project – **political clientelism**. As professor Georgi Karasimeonov outlined, in the initial period political parties chose to become a part of networks of political clientelism at the expense of their function of political representation<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the conclusion that follows is that during predominant influence of the BSP in the first period, political clientelism, inherited from the communist period, was preserved and transformed to adjust the multi-party system. In other words, it was not just that the BSP created its own circle of clientèle, but also it served as the major agent of political clientelism "infecting" most other parties<sup>32</sup>, which will become visible during the second transition project.



Ivan Kostov

31 Georgi Karasimeonov, The Crisis of the First post-communist Party System in Bulgaria, Paper presented at the ECPR 2004 Joint Session of workshops, Uppsala, Sweden 2004, p. 2, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/uppsala/ws2/Karasimeonov.pdf> [Retrieved 11th April, 2008]

32 Georgi Karasimeonov, *opt.cit.*, p. 3

**The second transition project** was laid down into the hands of the new UDF's elite, represented by the new Prime Minister, Ivan Kostov. The wave of painful and fast economic and political reforms was implemented during the next few years. The agreements with the international monetary institutions paved the way for implementing the reforms – fast privatization or shutting down of state enterprises, the liberalisation of trade, reforming of the social and pension funds etc. In the area of foreign politics, Kostov's government orientated the country towards the EU and the USA, with a declared intention to join the NATO and eventually the EU.

But, the public support for Kostov's government was diminishing, which can be seen from the opinion polls from that time. Reasons were the following:

**1. Social consequences** - The majority of citizens were not aware of the price they had to pay: losing jobs, price increase - were just some of the negative outcomes of the transition. Moreover, the most endangered strata of the population: the poor and pensioners were cut of from the privileges that they had during the previous period - pension and social funds, medical care were not in the focus of positive reforms.

**2. Clientelism** - Instead of cutting the practice established by the BSP, the leadership of the UDF created its own clientelist model, and established the "friendly circle" connected to the party nomenclature. It resulted in the UDF becoming a party of the special corporate interest, and the "friendly circle" became the beneficiary of the privatization process that gained momentum in the late 1990s<sup>33</sup>. The UDF clientelist model helped its alienation from the citizens, who did not recognize it any more as an agent of reform, but moreover as an interest group motivated to gain as much wealth as possible on the expense of the state and citizens. The notion of clientelism in public was directly linked to *corruption*.

**3. Corruption** – during the last two years of rule Kostov's government was undermined with the corruption scandals like the scandal with the "Trakija" highway, the privatization of Bulgarian national telecommunication company "Bulgartelekom" and BGA "Balkan" (the Bulgarian aero company). The notion of corruption became important in two aspects: a) it strengthened the picture about the corrupted political elite and b.) it helped the creation of negative sentiments towards the companies from the West, "which are buying the state's enterprises for "zulti stotinki"".

Under the UDF's leadership, the second project of transition went relatively successfully, but with the consequences for the party itself and for its leader. As the survey of the New Europe Barometer showed in 2001, the final year of the UDF's government, around two thirds of citizens expressed high distrust in the established political parties<sup>34</sup>. After the parliamentary elections in 2001, the new party led by the

33 Georgi Karasimeonov, *opt.cit.*, p. 3

34 Georgi Karasimeonov, *opt.cit.*, p. 6

former tsar Simeon Saksoburgotski won the elections, and formed a new government which continued the path of reform established by the former government, despite the promises for change. Political clientelism and corruption were not cut down as promised. Instead, the minor partner in the Simeon’s government, the Movement for Rights and Freedom (further in the text MRF), introduced its own ethnic model of clientelism.

### 3.1.2 - Bulgarian Ethnic Model – traits and consequences

According to the Census of 2001, the population of Bulgaria was composed predominantly of ethnic Bulgarians – 83.7%. 9.4% were ethnic Turks and 4.7% ethnic Roma<sup>35</sup>. The history of Bulgarian ethnic model is rather peculiar. It was developed as an answer to the ethnic policy applied during the communist regime. Here we shall not discuss the historical perspective of it, but it is possible to outline its major characteristics. As first, the communist regime, since 1950s, performed undercover aggressive politics towards the national minorities in Bulgaria, especially Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks. The process came to its peak during 1984-1985 during so-called “Revival Process” which presumed the *Bulgarisation* of names of Bulgarian Turks. Turkish language, religion practice and wearing traditional attire were banned<sup>36</sup>. The result was the unrest among them, which culminated in 1989 through public protests of the Turkish minority. The government reacted violently – after the clashes with police with several hundreds of casualties, around 350,000 of Bulgarian Turks emigrated to Turkey. Later, just around 150,000 returned, while the others opted to stay.

In order to pacify the situation in the country, the ruling elite accepted proposals of the Committee for National Reconciliation which proposed restoration of the traditional peaceful co-existence of different ethnic communities instead of violent ethnic clashes. At the end of 1989, the government issued a decree which proclaimed the restoration of the names of Bulgarian Turks. In the following months, the government also adopted series of measures to help their re-incorporation into the Bulgarian society.

<sup>35</sup> Official data of the National Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Bulgaria, <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos.htm> [Retrieved 23st May, 2008]

<sup>36</sup> Antonina Zhelyazkova, “The Bulgarian Ethnic Model”, East European constitutional Review, volume 10, number 4, fall 2 001, <http://www.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol10num4/focus/zhelyazkova.html> [Retrieved 29th May, 2008]



Ahmed Dogan

These were the beginnings of the Bulgarian ethnic model, which was foreseen as a tool for the prevention of ethnic clashes in the future – as professor Anna Krasteva outlined, “The Bulgarian ethnic model was the most successful political product of Bulgarian fragile democracy”<sup>37</sup>. It was established by the new Bulgarian Constitution from 1991. The Bulgarian Constitution issued the following provisions:

1. It grants equal rights to all Bulgarian citizens with no privileges on grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identification, religion, sex etc.
2. It prescribes the obligatory studying and usage of Bulgarian language, but at the same time it granted the right to all to study and use their own mother tongue alongside Bulgarian. (Art.36)
3. It guarantees the right to all Bulgarian citizens to develop their own national culture (Art. 54)

However, the Article 11.4 of the same Constitution prohibits formation of the parties based on ethnic, religious and racial line. This article of the Constitution had far reaching consequences for the Bulgarian political party system and for the later phenomenon of “Ataka”.

The opposition movement of Bulgarian Turks – **the MRF**, which was established as an answer to the policy of the communist regime in January 1990, was registered as a party and Ahmed Dogan was elected as its leader. Some of the MPs from the UDF made an appeal to the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria, where they claimed that the

<sup>37</sup> Anna Krasteva, “Europeanization and Institutionalization of migration policy in Bulgaria”, in Maya Getova, Ahmend Nazmi Uste(Eds.), The Impact of European Union: Case of Bulgaria, Case of Turkey, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, 2007, p. 125



MRF is unconstitutional party according to the Article 11.4. But the Constitutional Court approved their legitimacy, thus the MRF became an integral part of the Bulgarian political scene. The MRF officially does not employ the minority discourse, but liberal one, and its party ranks are open to all the citizens of Bulgaria.

The existence of the MRF helped settling down the tensions between the Bulgarians and Turks in the country offering suitable platform of representation for not just Bulgarian Turks, but also other ethnic minorities like Roma. Roma themselves founded their own parties. In 1998, their well known party was founded under the name of Euroroma, which also has a mixed membership. Its leader is Cvetelin Kancev, and it is in a coalition with the BSP since 2001.

In recent years, the Bulgarian ethnic model could be endangered because most of the public perceives the existence of the MRF, on the Bulgarian political scene, in a negative way. The reasons for this are various:

- **In the recent years the MRF managed to monopolize ethnic Turkish votes.** No matter what kind of politics it conducts, the MRF always has a chance to seize considerable portion of seats in the parliament. On the other hand, the MRF protects the interests of its electorate no matter what is the cost for the state itself. Moreover, the monopoly over the votes allows the MRF to fully control the municipalities with the ethnic Turkish majority.

- **Suitable partner for almost every party in the parliament.** Thanks to its proportion of votes, since 2001, the MRF has twice been a crucial party for the formation of the new government. It is perceived in public that the MRF is much more influential in the executive political organs of the state. Their influence and practical control over few ministries (like the Ministry of Agriculture) made it possible for the MRF to create its specific model of clientelism.

- **Specific model of clientelism.** The leadership of the party openly created their own “friendly circle” of firms, which are a direct beneficiary of the MRF’s involvement in the government, thus helping and sponsoring the party, but also concentrating some of their business in the areas populated by Bulgarian Turks.

The general dissatisfaction which is produced by the type of politics which the MRF is conducting can be seen in the research of the “Market links” (one of the leading agencies for market and social research in Bulgaria): more than 76% of population evaluated negatively the performance of the MRF<sup>38</sup>. The MRF clientelist model and their practical and economic control over the regions which are dominantly populated by the Bulgarian Turks are one of the key factors which are causing, as professor Mihail Ivanov pointed out, the transformation of the dissatisfaction with the MRF’s policy to the ethnic dissatisfaction, now aiming at the Bulgarian Turks. The transformation

38 Market Links, Ima li granici za populizma – kolicestveno isledvane, Sofia, March 2006, p. 11 [www.mmlinks.net/BannerExch/Populizm.ppt](http://www.mmlinks.net/BannerExch/Populizm.ppt)

of dissatisfaction made a suitable ground for “Ataka” to transcend the economic and political-corporative origins to the ethnic ones, thus to find a scapegoat for the problems of Bulgarian transition.

### 3.1.3 - Rise of populism – Simeon Saksoburgotski

For the phenomenon of the rise of political extremism in Bulgaria, of imminent importance is the appearance of its predecessor, if not by political goals then by methodology in which a political message is transmitted to the public, the National Movements Simeon the Second (further in the text NMSS). The engagement of the former tsar Simeon Saksoburgotski can be considered a cornerstone for the appearance of populism as an alternative to the liberal democratic procedures, thus caused the first wave of populism in Bulgaria. Indeed populist methods were not a stranger for the Bulgarian political scene. During 1990s one party led by controversial businessman George Ganchev – the Bulgarian Business Bloc (further in the text - BBB) was behaving in a manner which could be described as populist. Although it managed to pass the threshold twice at the parliamentary elections, the BBB remained on the margin of mainstream politics.

The arrival of the former tsar to Bulgaria made a complete turnover on the political scene of Bulgaria. In the beginning of 2001, Simeon returned to Bulgaria and proclaimed that he plans to engage in politics of the country, as a candidate on the following presidential elections later that year. His intention was prevented by the Constitutional Court, which denied his right to be a candidate, due to a fact that he did not live in the country for five years. The decision did not stop former monarch – his attention was turned to upcoming parliamentary elections. In order to breach the procedure which did not allow him to register a new party in a short time, he registered for parliamentary elections a coalition of two small non-parliamentary parties, which carried the name of his future party – the NMSS. Now, the stage was set for the “Bulgarian year of wonders” as the period of Simeon’s governance as a Prime Minister was dubbed in the book “The Bulgarian transition”<sup>39</sup>.

39 Евгения Иванова (Eds.), Страх и жажда за възмездие, Нов Български Универзитет, София, 2007, p.328



Simeon Saksoburgotski

At the moment of his arrival Simeon enjoyed around 38% of public support, according to the opinion polls<sup>40</sup>. After few months of campaigning Simeon got almost the absolute majority at the parliamentary elections in 2001 – 42.74% of the electoral support. And at the moment of the formation of the new government around 77% of citizens had a positive opinion about the new Prime Minister<sup>41</sup>. In the following text, the methods of Simeon’s political presentation will be analysed:

- **The whole concept of Simeon’s campaign was based on his personality** – the former tsar presented himself as a unique person which is above all parties and institutions. The national media presented his life in exile and business successes with mythical preferences.

- **Simeon made an appeal to the people as a whole – like monarch appeals to his people** - Simeon did not make any difference among people. He preached the erasing of all differences and cleavages within the Bulgarian society for the better future, which would come soon. On the other hand, Simeon showed total indifference towards the ideology, party structure and programme. The NMSS, at first, opted for the place which was already occupied by the UDF – democratic right. Later, they were accepted in the Liberal International. Regarding the party structure, it was very weak, with no strictly defined stratification. The political platform of Simeon’s coalition virtually did not exist – it was explained that after the victory at the elections, the experts would find out what is the best for the people and country.

- **The crucial perils for the improvement of the situation in Bulgaria were**

<sup>40</sup> Francesca Marri, “Bulgaria”, in Stefano Bianchini and Marcella Del Vecchio and Rosa Balfour (eds.), Guida ai paesi dell’Europa centrale, orientale e balcanica, il Mulino, Bologna, 2002, p. 153

<sup>41</sup> Francesca Marri, opt.cit., p.158

**political parties and their political elite** – Simeon accused political parties and their leaders of being the major agents of political corruption. His target was predominantly the group from the UDF and its “friendly circle”, who were before that under constant attack from the Bulgarian mainstream media.

- **Political promises were structured in “make a wish form”** - the best example is Simeon’s promise of a fast and substantial increase of people’s incomes through improvement of economy. Former monarch promised that this will happen in “not more and not less than eight hundred days”.

From above said, it is possible to conclude that the NMSS and Simeon encompassed, in almost all aspects those basic features of populism, outlined in the theoretical framework:

- Appeal to the “people” as whole – in this case it was done in a monarchist fashion. The monarch is a direct representative of the will and needs of the people, thus there should be no intermediators between him and the people.

- There is a clear conception us versus them – “people” versus corrupted elite represented in political parties as key transmitters of corruption and clientelism. In this case the enemy is internal, the elite, which had chosen to divide from the people, get rich at the expense of the same people.

- Promises were not based on reality since there is no plan how to achieve it – the only guarantee is the charismatic personality of the leader, whose personal integrity comes from his historical legacy.

The first wave of populism came in a soft variant, since the Simeon’s platform did not contain general dissatisfaction with the main goals of transition. The target of the platform was not the system *per se*, but rather a by-product of the system like corruption and clientelism. The foreign politics of the government was not criticized, nor was the influence of the national minorities. But Simeon’s victory and his “monarchist” version of populism opened the doors for the new ways in political behaviour. The established system of representative democracy, personified in two historic parties, was partially undermined – the BSP managed to re-claim their positions while the right part of the scene faced fragmentation, thus becoming an open field for new populist parties and prominent leaders.



### 3.1.4 - The influence of the media

The phenomenon of populism on the Bulgarian political scene is connected to the influence of the media. For all of the three waves of populism there was an exclusive media campaign in favour of one political personality and platform. This topic is much more complex to be treated in the right way in this thesis, and it has to be an object of a separate research. Here we shall just try to outline the basic characteristics of the influence of the media for the first and second wave of populism.

For the first wave of populism led by Simeon Saksoburgotski the state and mainstream media had imminent importance:

1. Mainstream media were helping the engagement of Simeon in politics, with giving an overrated attention to his attempts to become a candidate for the president or to register a party
2. Media were creating mythical aura around former tsar, regarding his heritage, education and financial successes
3. Simultaneously media was campaigning against Ivan Kostov and results of his government, emphasizing privatization scandals
4. All promises of Simeon for the work of the future government, like the famous “800 days promise” were presented without any critique.

The rise of “Ataka” on the political scene was the copy, in much smaller scale, of the rise of the NMSS. “Ataka” was condemned by the mainstream media, but it had the non-compromise support of one private television – the television “SKAT”. The television channel “SKAT” is a private cable television company which was founded in Burgas in 1992. It is publicly marketed as the “television which works with a sense of worry for Bulgaria”. Their programme has low production quality, but with introducing of some novelties like the direct contact programme, “SKAT” TV became one of the most popular channels. This kind of programme contributed to a large extent to the “SKAT”’s popularity and spreading of the network – from a local Burgas television, today network is spread all over the South Eastern Bulgaria and major towns.

Another peculiar characteristic of the “SKAT” television is that their programme differed from the discourse of the official media. This television promoted people who were out of the mainstream political and scientific circles. They used “SKAT” as the

public tribune for expressing their opinion about contemporary domestic and foreign political scene – soon the television got the epithets “nationalistic” and “chauvinistic”. And that is how Volen Siderov became a part of SKAT’s editorial board.



Volen Siderov on the television SKAT

In 2003, due to the misunderstandings with the owner of the magazine “Monitor” Volen Siderov made a transfer to the television “SKAT”, where he got a ten- minute long slot, which he named “Ataka”. In the one of the following chapters there will be more about Siderov’s engagement on “SKAT” TV. For now, it is suffice to say that this television was defending and supporting the political platform of “Ataka”. In the first 14 years of existence “SKAT” managed to shape the profile of its programme (out of mainstream topics) and acquire more or less large number of viewers. Then, the significant proportion of them opted for “Ataka” at the first elections, since their platform was corresponding to the programme scheme. Hence, thanks to the media support of “SKAT” “Ataka” managed to break the blockade of the mainstream media.

The question is, how this channel, which from its beginnings in 1992 did not respect the principles of political correctness, managed to have a free broadcast without any implication or reaction from the national broadcast bodies? Vladimir Shopov expressed an opinion that the national broadcast body did not react in numerous other cases when the Law was also breached by other televisions even the national channels, like in the case of advertising of liquors before 10 o’clock in the evening. Thus, the body could not react in the case of “SKAT”. Indeed, at the very start of the show “Ataka”, on “SKAT” in July 2003, an appeal to the public prosecutor was made that with his lectures Siderov breached the Article 10 of the Law on radio and television. But the action went without response.

The by-products of transition and of the Bulgarian ethnic model gave the wind in the back to “Ataka”, which built its whole rhetoric on the radical critique of it. These by-products were presented, in its rhetoric, as real outcomes of these projects. On the other hand, the success of Simeon and his party broke the established pattern of political relations and political behaviour, which helped political discourse of “Ataka” to find people prepared to listen to it. And finally, “SKAT” television played an important role as a transmitter of “Ataka”’s message.

### 3.2 - Programme of the political party “Ataka”

Party programmes are considered a basic tool for recognisability of one party on the political scene. Programmes represent the major documents of parties’ self identification, on the first place regarding ideology thus positioning the party on the right-left continuum. Regarding the programme typology there are two different types of programmes: programmes outlining the principles and working programmes. The first express general and fundamental beliefs and the second outline more broad and specific concept of intentions, accounting for the future political plans of the party. Unlike other parties “Ataka” did not make any effort to issue a document which could be called a programme in clear sense of words. The documents that were issued belong to the group of programmes that are outlining the principles of the party.

“Ataka” had issued two short documents which can be treated as programmatic – “20 Principles of the National Union “Ataka”” and “Programme Scheme” Shortly before the elections for the European Parliament (further in the text EP) in 2007, the party had also issued a short document in which it had outlined the goals of this party on the EU level. Both documents are in absolute disorder, without any noticeable scheme or organisation of party goals. They are not divided in thematic parts like economy, foreign policy etc. – these themes overlap in the same sentences.

It is unknown which organ of the party adopted these documents - most likely it was brought by “Ataka”’s Central Committee, which is, as we shall see in the following chapters, under a complete control of the party leader. If so, it is possible to suspect that if not both, then at least “20 principles” were made according to the issues which Volen Siderov addressed during his lectures on the SCAT television.

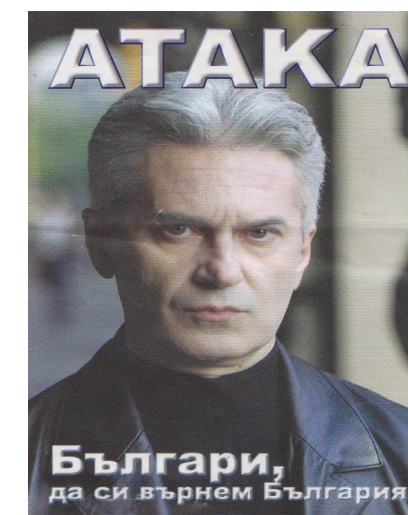
In the interview, the vice-president of “Ataka”, Anton Sirakov pointed out that these documents are nothing more than a list of unchangeable principles, which will guide the party in their political struggle in the following period. He confirmed that “Ataka” did not issue its real programme. Later Mr Sirakov refers to these documents as party programmes – the conclusion that follows is that the idea of “Ataka”’s programme is blurred even for the membership of the party.

In the following text, above mentioned documents will be analysed – with an attempt to establish a parallel with the statements of “Ataka”’s leadership. The translation of these three documents is possible to find in the section Annexes.

#### 3.2.1 - 20 Principles

The document “20 Principles” is the first programmatic document that “Ataka” issued, just before the parliamentary elections 2005. It is a quite short document, which starts with the main motto “**Bulgarians, lets return Bulgaria to us!**”. The motto itself implies that Bulgaria does not belong to Bulgarians as a nation any more, and that these twenty principles should represent a guide how the present situation should be reversed. In all of the twenty principles “Ataka” identifies the peril, the significant “other” who is preventing the progress of Bulgaria.

Like it was mentioned above, in the document, issues are not expressed in any visible order. To ease the interpretation of the document, I shall try to group these twenty principles in **five provisional programmatic areas** (although the content of some of the principles is often overlapping with the two areas): *Re-Bulgarisation of Bulgaria, Social issues, Economy, Anti-corruption measures, Foreign policy and International cooperation.*



Front Page of the leaflet with 20 principles

**I Re-Bulgarisation of Bulgaria** - comprises first three principles of the document. In short, with these three principles “Ataka” is insisting on the following:

1. Mono-nationality of Bulgaria without any possibility to divide it by ethnic, religious and cultural principles
2. Political parties based on the ethnicity, open or undercover, should not be allowed



to exist, since it is a violation of the Bulgarian Constitution. The existence of such a party should be treated as an attempt of separatism, thus all the responsible should be excluded from the Bulgarian citizenship since they voluntarily excluded themselves from the Bulgarian nation

3. Serious measures against the usage of other languages on the media financed by the state

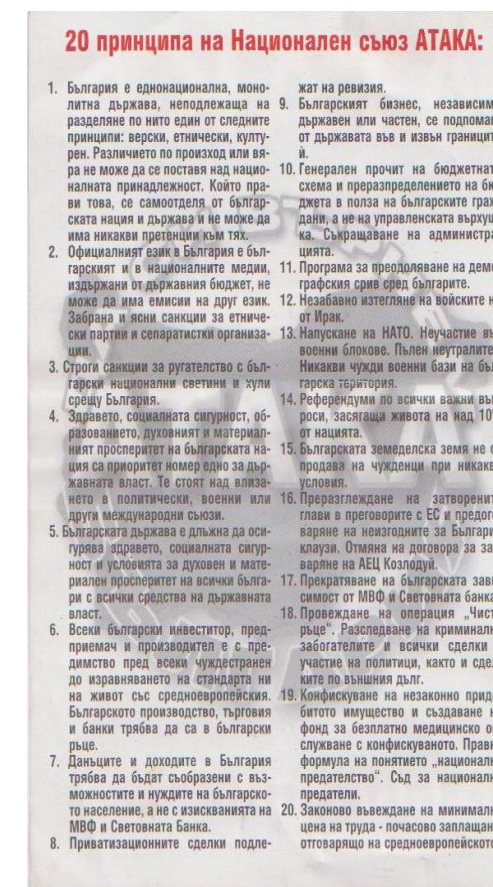
4. Serious sanctions against all who mock Bulgarian national sacred things and Bulgaria itself

With these first three principles “Ataka” is sending the message that the Bulgarian ethnic model, in reality, is not working. According to “Ataka”’s officials, there are certain forces (based on ethnic, religious and cultural differentiation) in the country trying to impoverish or even separate certain regions from Bulgaria. Obviously the main aim of these provisions is against the MRF and its existence, but also Euroroma and attempts to create an ethnic Macedonian party in the Bulgarian region of Pirin Macedonia. For “Ataka” the MRF represents a kind of “Trojan horse” of the Republic of Turkey, which is the major foreign enemy of Bulgaria. “Ataka” represents Turkey and the MRF as forces whose only goal is to weaken the Bulgarian state and renew the genocide against the Bulgarian people. “Ataka” is accusing the MRF’s leadership for being directly engaged as the agents of the Turkish secret service, as they were once connected with the secret service of the communist Bulgaria.

However, “Ataka” does not stop there – next target are Bulgarians - national traitors. Although aware of the MRF’s background, its partners - the BSP and the NMSS are tolerating it because of their interest to stay in power. Before said implies that the political party “Ataka” is the only force on the Bulgarian political scene which is not accepting that kind of compromise.

However, in these principles the rights of national minorities are not outlined. As Anton Sirakov (and Volen Siderov himself) pointed out, “Ataka” is against the Framework Convention on Human Rights and other documents on protection of minority rights, signed in the previous period by the Bulgarian officials. Hence, “Ataka” is not offering an alternative model which would ensure the equality of others with ethnic Bulgarians.

With the first three principles “Ataka” found the first target – the ethnic parties, the national minorities and corrupted political elites which are destroying the very basis of the Bulgarian state.



Back side of the leaflet with 20 principles

The principle 14 offers the solution how the Bulgarian people could stop measures or decisions which are threatening the very existence of the state – by introducing the referendums on every important question. “Ataka” suggests a tool how to breach decisions of the national institutions which are not in the interest of the Bulgarian people.

## II Social Issues

Principles 4, 5, 7, 11 and 20 are falling into the group of **Social issues**.

1. In the principles 4 and 5 “Ataka” refers to the obligatory role of the Bulgarian state to help the prosperity of the Bulgarian nation. Above all, the State must provide the resources for health and social security funds, but also for *the spiritual and material development of the nation*. Clearly, for “Ataka”, the state must be much more involved in the lives of the citizens than it is today.

2. In the principle 7 “Ataka” outlined the idea that taxes should be imposed on the basis of real needs of Bulgarian citizens, and not on request of the International Monetary Fund (further in the text IMF) and the World Bank.

3. The principle 11 deals with the demographical decline, against which the state should react with the protective and stimulative measures.

4. And finally, in the principle 20, the writers outlined that the minimal wage of workers should be defined by the law and its amount should be equal to the one in Central European countries (Mr Sirakov took Hungary as an example).

These principles outline the **second target of “Ataka” – transition which caused poverty of the citizens**. The poverty is caused by diminishing of the protective role of the state and behaviour of irresponsible political elites. What derives from the previously stated principles is that the “Ataka”’s leadership sees the increasing poverty as the product of three factors:

- First factor is the diminishing role of the state in the lives of Bulgaria’s citizens.
- Second factor are the consequences of the rule of the irresponsible political elites. They let impoverishment take place since it was in their own interests (from principles 4 and 5).
- The third factor includes the international monetary institutions which are imposing measures with undercovered aim to further weaken economic status of the citizens.

With these three principles “Ataka” outlined the intention to help the endangered social strata with reintroducing of the state as a regulator not just of the basic economic relations and conditions, but of all important economic and social aspects - similar to the West European social-democratic concept of the welfare state. As Mr Sirakov said, the state abandoned its protective role at the beginning of the transition, which it had during the communist period. Today, by any means, the state must retake this role, in order to secure better redistribution of the national wealth among the citizens. International factors, in this case the IMF and the World Bank are just undermining the more fair redistribution of it, hence Bulgaria must step out from these institutions.

The principle 19 (one of the principles which could be put in two groups) foresaw the way in which the corrupted elite should be treated. Their property should be confiscated, and invested as a suitable basis for a free health security fund.

### III Anti-corruption measures

Since the party was founded, the anti-corruption rhetoric has represented one of the main aspects of “Ataka”’s public image. In the principles 8, 10, 18 and 19 “Ataka” presented the plan against corruption. In the eyes of the majority of population the

transition is seen as the period in which those privileged societal groups (like bureaucracy and state elites) became rich at the expense of the state<sup>42</sup>.

- The principle 10 aims at the bureaucracy, a societal group which parasites on the state budget. The initial idea is lowering of the numerous administrations to a more reasonable number, making it more efficient.

- In the principle 18, the author presents a plan for the operation “**Clean Hands**”, aiming to process all the people whose wealth originates from their links with politics.

- Principle 8 outlines the revision of the privatization processes – since it can make the role of the “friendly circles” of political parties during the privatization process much clearer.

- Already mentioned principle 19 is going further with the plan of the confiscation of their property. It is curious to mention that this principle also presumes the legislative definition of who represents a “national traitor”. This provision is surpassing the aim of 19 principles and its group – fight against the corruption. A definition of the “national traitor” is not just concerned with the criminals, but also all others who are engendering the very existence of the state (the MRF, Euroroma, the former and the current prime ministers – the leadership of “Ataka” dubbed all of them as national traitors).

## IV Economical issues

Economy is the main subject of the principles 6, 8, 9, 15. These principles mainly comprise protective measures for the Bulgarian business and Bulgarian national resources (like the agricultural land) from the hands of the foreigners. These protective measures should primarily be concerned with the establishment of a predominant ownership of the Bulgarian nationals or the Bulgarian state in domestic market. The state should assume protective and corrective role in order to help the Bulgarian business in the country and abroad.

## V Foreign policy and international cooperation

Principles 12, 13, 16 and 17 are mainly focused on the foreign policy and international cooperation. With these principles “Ataka” is suggesting the radical shift from present Bulgarian foreign politics during last 17 years:

- “Ataka” promotes the revision of contracts with the international organisations, institutions and alliances, because the interest of Bulgaria and Bulgarians is not

<sup>42</sup> Market links, opt.cit., p. 12



protected. The main target is the Bulgarian membership in the international monetary institutions and the NATO.

- Regarding the NATO, the accent is given to the Bulgarian participation in the war in Iraq. According to "Ataka", Bulgaria has no gains and its interest is not protected. "Ataka" promotes the military neutrality of Bulgaria as the best way to protect its interest and disagrees with the American military presence in Bulgaria, with the three NATO bases.

- In its relation with the EU Bulgaria should start the process of revision of negotiations in order to correct all those aspects which are putting Bulgaria in a highly unfavourable position. The symbol of this unfavourable position of Bulgaria in the EU is the "Koslodui" Nuclear Power Plant - which closure was demanded from Bulgaria during the negotiations with the EU.

The whole document "20 principles" is devoted to the identification of the enemies of Bulgarian people, in domestic and foreign sphere. "Ataka" is not offering the solutions for the problems it had identified, but just the intentions "what should be done". The second document, the "Programme Scheme" is trying to offer a sketch of solutions.

### 3.2.2 - Programme scheme

"Programme Scheme" is much more comprehensive document than "20 Principles". It is divided in 10 sectors: Economy; National Security, order, anti-Mafia and criminal; Health Security; Social Security; Education, science, technology and culture; Religion; Judiciary system; Media; Domestic affairs and Foreign affairs. Still, the document is quite short and written in the same manner as the previous one: short paragraphs without any explanation about their implementation.

1. In the first paragraph, Economy, writers have outlined the desirable way of functioning of Bulgarian economy, which Anton Sirakov described as "social capitalism". It is oriented towards the redefinition of the process of privatization, in the manner described in the previous document. The role of the state is of great importance due to the fact that it defines a direction of the development of economy. The state budget should be better planned, to support the development of the domestic invention activity and business. The business itself should be relieved of all ties which are unsuitable for

its development. Again, some of the sources from the budget should be redirected to the social and medical security funds. According to "Ataka", with careful rebalancing of the state's resources, a suitable situation for the enlargement of the GDP could be created. That would help freeing Bulgaria from ties of the IMF and the World Bank.

2. In the second and seventh paragraph "Ataka" is developing ideas how to lower the level of criminal with the creation of the database of all criminal activities. As far as the judiciary system is concerned, it should be purged from the corrupted officials, hence make it more efficient. Special care would be given to the problem of drug distribution and usage. Curiously, "Ataka" supports the reintroduction of the *death sentence*, as the worst kind of judiciary punishment – this reference is probably there to imply the strong hand with which "Ataka" would rule.

3. In the third and fourth paragraph "Ataka" is arguing for the reform of the social and medical care system. The health security system should be reformed on the basis of the former communist one. The pension system should be also guaranteed by the budget.

4. In the fifth paragraph, "Ataka" presents ideas for the reform of the sector of education and culture. Special attention is given to the protection and support of the Bulgarian culture and language in the country and abroad.

5. In the sixth paragraph "Ataka"'s vision about the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church within the state is presented. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and its Holy Synod should retake its historical position and influence in Bulgaria, to the extent of direct counselling of the government with the heads of the church. As written, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church should become a mirror for the value system of the future of Bulgaria. Here for the first time "Ataka" is suggests that the religious issues are an important matter for this party. Anton Sirakov expressed an opinion that this paragraph presumes only the primacy of the historic Bulgarian religion in the state. But in the "Programme Scheme" is revealed that "Ataka" presumes much larger role for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church which is surpassing the modern concept of the division of the church and the state.

6. In the paragraph about the Inner affairs "Ataka" proposes the reform of democratic system in the country. The reform should produce an alternative to the present system of representative democracy to a more direct, pro-movement kind of democratic activity. It proposes referendums as a key tool for taking the important decisions about the country's future, which would establish a new kind of political system and withdraw the country from political and military blocs. It denounces the present party system, referring that parties should not have the exclusivity in the politics of the country. Namely, it introduces citizen organisations and individuals as

an alternative to political parties. On the other hand, parties would not be evaluated according to their power or membership, but the system would offer the equal chances to every party, no matter how small it is.

7. The last paragraph denounces the present foreign politics of Bulgaria. For "Ataka", Bulgaria should follow its own interest and step out from the NATO. Present politics of the state is forcing Bulgaria to work against its regional and economic interest. The relations with the EU should be also re-evaluated, with the simultaneous re-establishing of the economic cooperation with the countries of the former Soviet bloc, Arab world, China, India and others.

The second programmatic document, "Programme scheme", introduced two new elements of "Ataka"'s platform – the role of the church and the reform of the political system. Here particularly interesting is the area of foreign politics. It seems that „Ataka” is afraid that Bulgaria has lost other valuable markets important for the Bulgarian economy with the accession to the NATO and the EU.

## European elections platform

Before the elections for the EP, "Ataka" issued a short document, written in a pamphlet style. "Ataka" outlined goals of this party on the EU level.

- Support to the state sovereignty and respect of the interest of all member states
- Reinforcement of the free trade without corporative interests
- Respect of the law and the equality
- The basis of the European civilization is the Christianity, whose values and merits should be protected.
- In accordance with that "Ataka" is against the resurrection of the European Constitution project which was rejected on the referendums in France and the Netherlands and formation of the European super state
- Against the accession of Turkey to the EU
- Against the transfer of the parts of the national sovereignty to the level of the EU
- Against the bad quota system which is imposing restrictive measures over national economies

These three documents, even if written without any composition, release important information about the intentions of the party. And clearly, few conclusions about the ideological profile of the party could be drawn, in comparison to the basic theoretical assumptions about the extreme right parties

1. "Ataka" is identifying the enemies of the Bulgarian nation, thus making a clear dichotomy: us versus them – the basic standpoints of all populist and extremist parties. For "Ataka", Bulgaria is in danger because of the "treason" of various groups from inside (ethnic parties, national minorities and corrupted political elites), but also endangered from the outside by the multinational companies, the NATO, the USA and others. There are no "foreign elements" (the immigrants) like in the programmes of the West European extreme right parties - their role is performed by the Bulgarian Turks and Roma.

2. "Ataka" is preaching social capitalism which is close to the solutions proposed by the other extreme right parties in Western Europe, most notably the National Front of Jean Marie Le Penn. Some Bulgarian scholars took the provisions about the welfare state and about the re-nationalisation in order to prove that "Ataka" is the extreme left party. The extreme right parties are pursuing some of the leftist provisions regarding the welfare state, but at the same time they are renouncing some values of the post-material left. The coexistence of the right and left wing ideas in the same programme is not only the peculiarity of "Ataka". The parties from Western Europe are also employing similar ideas. The difference comes from the fact that "Ataka" proposes re-establishment of the social system which was a characteristic of the former, communist regime. Regarding the issue of re-nationalisation, "Ataka" is not the only extreme right party which had put this kind of a provision into a programmatic document. The parties from the neighbouring countries, like the Serbian Radical Party and the Greater Romania are also opposing the way in which the privatization had happened.

3. With insisting on the Re-Bulgarisation of Bulgaria "Ataka" stands up in defence of the natural community – Bulgarian nation and Bulgarian state which are endangered by the foreign elements. Again, this is a classical programmatic issue of the extreme right parties.

4. "Ataka" is criticizing the representative liberal democratic system and proposing much relaxed solution regarding the way of political representation of citizens. Still, from these documents is not visible if "Ataka" foresees the specific role of the national leader, like the most of the extreme right parties.

5. "Ataka" denounces supranationalism of the EU, instead of which some sort of the alliance of the European sovereign national states should be introduced. Also, "Ataka" expressed wide interest in the defence of the Christian roots of the EU.

6. Particular attention is given to the defence from the effect of globalization, before the Bulgarian economy is ready for the full open market competition.

From above said, it is clear that “Ataka” comprises, on the programmatic level, most of the characteristics of West European extreme right parties, except in some details regarding the specificities of the development of Bulgaria. “Ataka” displays a vast number of extremist positions displayed through the unequivocal chain of demands summarized in few short, but, to an extent, distinctive political messages. In its programmatic documents “Ataka” rejects the current political establishment in Bulgaria, yet it does not have a clear strategy how to change it. Furthermore, even some of the provisions of the programme are in the sharp contradiction. For example, *Ataka* pledges for the free trade on the European level, while it promotes reintroduction of the trade barriers in order to protect certain production branches in Bulgaria. Its positions are based primary on the critique of the establishment, but its alternative solutions for change are not substantial. It is clear that the programmes address the negative protest vote, presented even from different ideological positions if needed.

### 3.3 - Party Structure and Leadership

The theme of the following chapter is the role of the leader and leadership in the party “Ataka”. The inner structure of the party is defined by its Statute, but there are informal ways in which party is controlled. According to the binary typology of William Schonfeld, there are two basic types of party leadership: monarchy and oligarchy. First type presumes a way of domination which is characterized in dominant influence of one person to decisions brought by the whole group. Thus with that person the whole organisation is identified. Second type presumes one tight group of persons which has disproportional influence on the decisions brought by the whole organization. It is characterised by the similar political strength and influence of the group’s members<sup>43</sup>. Which of these types of party rule can be applied to “Ataka”? Herbert Kitchelt in his book *Party Systems in East Central Europe* had expressed his view about the formation of the political parties in Europe. For Kitchelt, the process of party formation is passing through three consecutive stages: first – formation of a party around the charismatic leader, second – formation (transformation) of a party on the basis of client-patron relations and third – formation of a party based on a programme<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Goati, “Moc partijskog vodje”, in Zoran Lutovac(Eds), *Demokratija u politickim strankama u Srbiji*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; Institut drustvenih nauka, Beograd, 2006, pp. 59-60

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Antony Todorov, “The Evolution of the Post-Communist Bulgarian Party System”, in Maya Getova, Ahmend

From these standpoints it is relatively easy to conclude that “Ataka” is a leadership party, due to its specific way in which it was created and the media exposure of its leader. Party programme(s) are too weak and dispersed to be the unique basis for the ideological gathering. On the other hand, “Ataka” has not been in power to be able to develop the clientèle relations.

In the following text we shall see the official structure of the party, and how the party leader influences the decision making process in the party. The second part is devoted to the leader himself and his political career and personality.

#### 3.3.1 - The Structure

The main document which defines and regulates the inner relations in one party is its Statute. The Statute of the political party “Ataka” is a quite short document, composed of 35 Articles. According to its Statute, the central organs of the party “Ataka” are the National Council, Central Council, Consultative Council and the president of the party:

1. The National Council holds meetings at least once a year and it is composed of delegates representing the membership of the local boards, in the range twenty members – one delegate. The National Council is summoned by the decision of the Central Council or on the initiative of the one third of the local boards. The powers of the National Council are: the adopting of all important decisions and documents for the party’s functioning between two sessions; electing of the president of the party; electing of the Central Council and the Consultative Council on the recommendation of the president; controlling of the work of the National Council and the Consultative Council etc.

2. The Central Council is a day to day governing organ of the party and it is composed of the resident of the party, the vice-resident, treasurer and the four other members elected by the National Council. It adopts the operative decisions between the two sessions of the National Council; elects the candidates for the MPs before the parliamentary elections and controls and conducts the material possessions of the party.

3. The Consultative Council is composed of the Central Council and the area coordinators. It creates proposals concerning the creation of the politics of “Ataka” for the National Council.

Nazmi Uste (Eds.), *The Impact of European Union: Case of Bulgaria, Case of Turkey*, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, 2007, p. 115



#### 4. The president represents the party in a day to day political activity.

Although the role of the leader is not emphasized in the Statute, a better look reveals that he is the person who practically controls the party between the two National Councils:

**1. Article 17.** - *the Central Council is elected by the National Council on the recommendation of the president of the party* – which implies that in the Central Council, which is the main operative body, only the people chosen by the president can participate. Moreover, the Central Council decides about the party cadres for all important political functions : **Article 17** – *the Central Council decides about the candidates for the MPs*; **Article 19.**- *the Central Council approves the candidates for mayors and candidates for the Municipal Assemblies*

**2. Article 20** - *the president of the party nominates the president of each municipal board* – regarding the authorities of the president of the municipal board, the president of the party has the complete control over the local boards.

**3. Article 21-** *the Control Council is composed of the president of the party and two other members nominated by him-* this implies that the main control body of the party is also under the control of the president.

**4. Article 18** – *the Consultative Council is composed of the Central Council and area coordinators* ; **Article 28**, par 1 – *the area coordinators are chosen and responsible only to the president of the party* - the body which proposes the politics of the party and serves as a link between the local boards and the National Council is also under the president’s direct control.

From above mentioned provisions it is possible to conclude that, in direct or indirect way, the president of the party holds “Ataka” under his personal control. From central bodies to the local board, all of the structures of the party are dependant on the personal decision of the president of the party. In order to make a change, the delegates at the National Council need the two third majority, which makes the change almost impossible. The conclusion that follows is that “Ataka”, according to its Statute, is a classical type of the leadership party.

### 3.3.2 - The Leader

#### Political Career before “Ataka”

The political biography of Volen Siderov starts in the late 1980s when he was involved in the anti-communist movement, which later on became the UDF. Siderov was particularly engaged in the Group 273 (named after the Article 273 of the Bulgarian penal law – the basis for prosecuting citizens for their political deeds). The aim of the group was releasing of all political prisoners, among whom a large group were Bulgarian Turks. Later, in the time of the formation of the original UDF, Volen Siderov had a role as one of the media representatives of the coalition. In September 1990 he became the editor of the main opposition newspaper *Democracy*, closely linked with the UDF. The *Democracy* was on the side of the 39 MPs who had left the National Parliament before the adoption of the new Constitution. As a consequence, this group had overtaken the leadership of the UDF and at that moment Volen Siderov became the editor in chief of the *Democracy*. The result of him being the head of the main opposition newspaper was completely unsatisfactory – the circulation of the newspaper dramatically decreased more than a year after, Volen Siderov was removed from the post of editor in chief and the UDF proper.

After his removal from the *Democracy* Volen Siderov did not play any important role in public. The only significant political engagement happened in 1995, when he worked for the central office of the BSP at the local elections. In 1998 Siderov became the deputy editor in chief of the nationalist newspaper *Monitor*, and he kept this post for the next five years.

With the return of the former tsar Simeon Saksoburgotski to Bulgaria, Siderov unsuccessfully tried to get involved in the NMSS. He was supposed to run at the head of the NMSS’s local list in his home town Yambol, but he was replaced with one local businessman.

As we can see, during 1990s Siderov had quite an interesting career full of upside-downs. But his real upstart will happen in 2003. Before that, Siderov was slowly shaping his ideological





Picture from the conference Global problems in modern history in Moscow, 2002.  
Volen Siderov first on the right side.

and political profile. The extremist side of his public image was built when he became connected to the international group which is denying Jewish holocaust in the World War II. In January 2002 Siderov participated on international conference in Moscow, under the name *Global problems in the modern history*. The real topic of the conference was "the demystification of the Jewish lies that prevail in the contemporary historical science". At the conference the "new discoveries" were presented like –

*"that there is no evidence of any slaughter of the Jews in concentration camps, as well as political statements to the effect that the Jews control the government, the media and the economy of the United States; that Western politicians are nothing more than Jewish puppets"; that the Jews blackmailed Switzerland for the money they had lost in Swiss banks during the Second World War, and so forth<sup>45</sup>"*

The conference was organised by the founding fathers of the international anti-Semitism: Ahmed Rami, David Duke, Gerald Frederic Tolben, Jurgen Graf and Rene-Louis Berclaz. Krassimir Kanev, the president of the Helsinki Committee of Bulgaria, in his article *The History of the photograph* expressed an opinion that Siderov's participation on this conference "appears to be something of his initiation to the international anti-Semitic circles"<sup>46</sup>. After this conference Siderov published his first book *The Boomerang of Evil* in which, before everything else, he expressed his anti-Semitic political views.

45 Krassimir Kanev, "The history of the photograph", in *Obektiv*, number 127, January 2006, p. 4

46 Krassimir Kanev, *opt.cit.*, p. 4

The year 2003 was a turning point in his career. Firstly, he decided to run for the mayor of the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, in front of one small nationalist party the National Alliance - Bulgarian Agricultural Peoples' Union. This first direct engagement in politics ended almost catastrophically – Volen Siderov got only 1,728 votes, or 0.45%. More importantly, due to a dispute with the owner of the *Monitor*, supposedly because of the content in his book *The Boomerang of Evil*, Siderov lost his job.

### Television SKAT and the show "Ataka"

In 2003 Volen Siderov started daily personal ten minute broadcast in the form of a lecture under the name of "Ataka" (attack). The broadcast begins quite spectacular, with the sound of the trumpet marking a military attack of the chivalry and continues with the Wagner's composition *The Ride of Valkyries* - with images of the soldiers on the front, atomic bomb, destruction of the twin towers on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2000 etc. The importance of this show is that Volen Siderov was the first Bulgarian journalist who opened a whole range of topics considered to as not good for European aspirations of Bulgaria. I would like to mention some of them:<sup>47</sup>

- Siderov questioned the justification of the "Revival process" and the consequences of the Government's politics towards the national minorities.

- Consequently Siderov's target became the **Bulgarian ethnic model and the MRF** as its product. He declared the MRF an exclusive agent of the interest of the Republic of Turkey. The words which were used also shifted the borders of politically incorrect - "Turkish barbarians" and "Anti-constitutional genocide party" etc.

- **Gypsy criminality** – Siderov was the first who openly gave an ethnic adjective to the criminal. The Bulgarian Roma were marked as the source of criminal that has to be stopped. In the same time he accused the Government, the EU and the Roma organisations for money laundering and redirecting of that money to private pockets, on expense of Bulgarians.

- **Jewish and mason conspiracy** was also one of the major topics in the show. The claim was directed towards the foreign politics of the USA which is directly under the influence of the "Jewish lobby machine". The most interesting were probably his speculations about current president of the USA and his connections with the "Wall street Jews" and the Arab Bin Laden family.

- Siderov was one of the first who started anti- EU campaigning because of the closure of four blocs of "Koslodui" nuclear power plant.

47 The following list was made as a result of personal inquiry to the uploaded emissions of the emission "Ataka" uploaded on the web site V-box

The conclusion that follows is that the political platform of the party “Ataka” was almost completely based on the TV show of Volen Siderov. The TV show “Ataka” helped him establish a suitable basis in the electorate. After two years of literal media campaigning through the television SKAT, Siderov was ready for the elections.

### Political career in “Ataka”

In April 2005 as a leader of the coalition which carried the name of his future party Siderov applied for the parliamentary elections. The coalition entered the parliament, and Siderov finally found himself in a “prime time”. As the leader of the parliamentary group, he immediately breached all informal rules of behaviour in such an institution: constant interrupting of the president of the Parliament, abusing of other fellow MPs are just some of the examples.

Except the fact that he pushed his party into the parliament, to this date the major success of Volen Siderov was his candidacy on the presidential elections in 2006. Again surprisingly, he got the 21.2 % of the vote, or around 600 000 votes. Due to the legislative provisions (in order to win the candidate has to get 50% + 1 of votes of all assigned voters) , as the candidate which in the first round of elections got the second place, Siderov found himself as the opponent in the second round to the then reigning President Georgi Parvanov. The rest of the opposition parties refused to support the leader of “Ataka”, because of his extremist political background and chosen to support Parvanov or to call for boycott. Volen Siderov ended with 24% of the vote in the second round.



Logo of the coalition “Ataka” in 2005

Due to the fact that throughout his career with “Ataka” Siderov used language which is, at least, politically incorrect, it was a matter of time before somebody would react to that. A societal coalition called “Citizens against the hatred”, founded by few intellectuals, which raised this issue in public. Their goal was to stop the actions of Volen Siderov, because he had breached with his statements the Law on protection against discrimination, the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the International

convention for abolishing of all forms of discrimination and International pact for citizen and political rights<sup>48</sup>. As they proclaimed “Siderov promises that he will return Bulgaria to the Bulgarians with de-gypsization and de-turkization; Back in the days of his pre-election campaign, Siderov promised his future engagement *Finally, the Bulgarians will have their own Government in the Parliament, without gays, Gypsies, Turks, foreigners, Jews and all other, but only and exclusively Bulgarians*. His official statements are full of illegal qualification like “gay-lesbian gatherings” or “the terrorists from the gypsy ghettos”. This alliance has started the process before the Sofia Rayon Court in January 2006. The court decided that Siderov is guilty for breaching the provisions of the Law for protection against discrimination, thus he has to stop with instigation towards discrimination and to stop with these kinds of activities in the future. For the second of eight deeds- provoking of the discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was decided that Volen Siderov is not guilty. The process is still in the procedure

### Siderov as a writer

***Dear compatriot,  
This book is not a criminal novel,  
Nor a love novel.  
The book which you have in your hands,  
Has collected the words,  
With which I wage the battle.  
It is the spirit of my spirit,  
It is the pulse of my pulse.  
The letter is the weapon,  
With which I wage for  
Free and independent Bulgaria  
For almost twenty years.  
Join in and take part in the attack!  
The pledge is Bulgaria***

### Volen Siderov<sup>49</sup>

As it was said before, Volen Siderov became a writer relatively late. In the period of 2002-2007 he published four books, and two of them will be presented: *The Boomerang of Evil*, and *My battle for Bulgaria*.

<sup>48</sup> Report from the session before the Sofia Rayon Court <http://www.bgogemini.org/info-update/new/page.php?id=31> [Retrieved 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2008]

<sup>49</sup> Волен Сидеров, Моят битка за България, Бумеранг, София, 2007, p. 354 (translation I.N.)



## The Boomerang of Evil

In the early 2002, Volen Siderov, then the editor in chief of the magazine *Monitor*, issued a controversial book under the name of *The boomerang of Evil*. The book is entirely devoted to one topic – that there is a world wide conspiracy against the Christianity as a whole (but particularly Eastern Orthodox Christianity) which lasts now for around 1000 years. The involved in this conspiracy are before all Jewish people, but also Masons, French Revolutionaries, Communists. Here I will give some of the general facts about the book:

- Siderov considers Judaism as the par-excellence project for controlling and ruling the entire world. He considers parts of the Old testaments and Talmud as the first genocide programmes in the world, in which an exclusive claim was made that the Jewish people are the only chosen people. Siderov backed his claim with the quotes from some unpublished versions of Talmud, in which is said how non-Jews should be treated. Thus, he derives the conclusion that in the last 1000 years Jews are trying to manipulate and rule over the Christian population.

- Separately from the Jews, but acting in accordance with their circles, Volen Siderov marked Masons and their secret societies as the followers of Satan's cults whose aim is to eradicate Christianity. He establishes a link between Satanist cults, Templar knights, Masons and the movement for the reform of the Catholic Church started by Luther and Kalvin as a conspiracy which had started after the First crusade in 1099. From that point, the writer is criticizing Protestantism as a product of Satan's work, and by doing it he criticizes all the protestant states, especially today's USA. When speaking about the Anabaptists, Volen Siderov calls them the first communists in the world, as communism is a product of anti-Christian battle.

- Then, Siderov denounces all the achievements of the Great French Revolution and the Enlightenment period, accusing it for the destruction of the "holy social order" which was present until then in France. He is especially harsh on the deeds of the Revolutionaries towards the Catholic Church. Curiously enough, he established the parallels between the French Revolution in 1790 and the October Revolution in Russia. But most importantly, both revolutions were inspired by the Jews and Masons in order to destroy Christianity.

- The major part of the book is devoted to the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks. For Siderov communism was a planned project to destroy eastern Orthodoxy, as the backbone of Christianity in the world. Particularly, the main source was the tsarist Russia. Siderov then makes a discourse that the whole project was a part of the Jewish conspiracy. He even analyses the nationality of the most important

Bolsheviks, where he came to the conclusion that the vast majority of them were Jews. So the conclusion that he draws is that the October Revolution was a part of a "grand scheme" to destroy Russia, Slavic nations (before all Russians in the World War II) and Orthodox Christianity

- Although not giving too much attention to it, Siderov also criticises Nazism as a regime. He mentions the esoteric and anti-Christian roots of Hitler's personal beliefs that he later transcended to the National Socialist party and its whole ideology. But, what is curious, Siderov denies the Holocaust against the Jews. He claims that in fact everything was a part of a scheme in which the Americans were directly involved.

- And finally, Volen Siderov states that the USA is a new Judea, a country which is directly founded by the Jews and Masons, as a tool in concluding the great plan - the rule over all other nations. For that purpose all powers of the USA are employed, and all of its institutions. Above all, he criticizes the international organizations over which they have a complete control, like the NATO and IMF. The IMF is particularly under Siderov's attack since this institution was made to help impoverishment of all other peoples in the world. According to the writer of this book the new world scale genocide is happening.



Boomerang of Evil – front page

## My Battle for Bulgaria

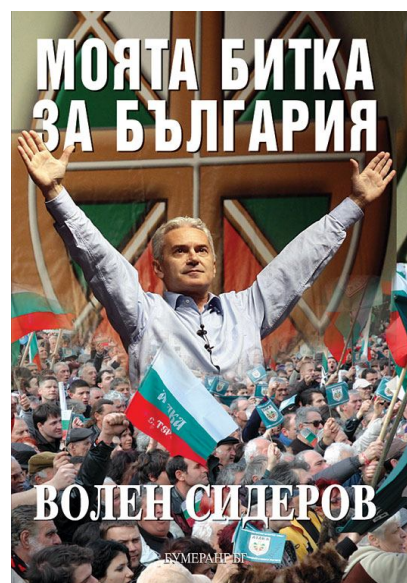
In 2007 Siderov published his book "My battle for Bulgaria" where he gathered his articles from the newspaper *Ataka*, some interviews and even parts of the speeches from the Parliament from the period 2005-2007. The probable intention that he had was issuing of the retrospective book of his career as a leader of "Ataka" – in order to

present what he had done in “his battle for Bulgaria”. In fact, this book is a collection of what is possible to call a classical presentation of the platform of “Ataka”. The book begins with his first official addressing of the Bulgarian Parliament, where he stated that the “course of history has been changed” with the appearance of “Ataka” on the political scene of Bulgaria:

- The most frequently used topics were the Bulgarian Turks and the MRF. The context in most of the articles of Siderov was that the Republic of Turkey and the MRF are preparing a new genocide against Bulgarians, like it had happened in 1876 and 1913 in Eastern Trace.

- By attacking the ruling coalition, Siderov devoted most of his articles to the former leader of the BSP and the current president of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov. In the articles Siderov accuses Parvanov for a coalition with the MRF, proclaiming him a “national traitor”.

- Crimes done by the criminals of Roma ethnic origin is the third most employed topic in the book. Commenting the murders and robberies and by giving the ethnic preferences to it, Siderov is trying to create a negative image of the whole ethnic community of the Bulgarian Roma.



My Battle for Bulgaria - front page

- The USA and the Bulgarian membership in the NATO is the fourth topic – but mostly related to the three military basis that the Government of Bulgaria offered to the NATO and Bulgarian engagement in Iraq. Siderov again accuses the Bulgarian Government for the treason of national interests.

The short poem which was given at the beginning of this sub-chapter reveals the purpose of the book “My battle for Bulgaria”. The book is in fact Siderov’s vision

of himself on the political scene of Bulgaria, or at least what he would like to be - a leader who exists to open the eyes of his compatriots through the words that represent his twenty-year struggle for the future of Bulgaria. But this book reveals that the whole project of “Ataka” is dependant on Siderov, or at least he sees it like that.

The book itself is nothing more than the *ad-hoc* collection of the articles from the media, presented in the chronological manner. There is no inner logic, or thematic organisation of the chapters. It is a mere overview of the actions and comments of the representatives of “Ataka” in the given period.

To understand the complete message of “Ataka”, it is not enough to rely just on its programmatic documents or to public statements of its leaders. As a leadership party dependant, in every sense, on the personality and political market value of Volen Siderov, it is completely necessary to read his books. The whole concept of the programme of “Ataka” becomes much clearer. His scripture in *the Boomerang of Evil* explains its fierce anti-American and anti-Israely discourse which is present in their documents and public statements. On the other hand, to the fact that “Ataka” became a parliamentary party, Volen Siderov does not, any more, have the freedom he had in the previous period, so he cannot exploit openly the anti-Jewish topics in his public addressing.

The political development of Volen Siderov is not that much peculiar as it looks at the first glance. In fact, there were some politicians following the similar pattern before him - a shift from preaching pro-Western democratic views to the expressing of the extreme nationalist discourse. Many people who were in the beginnings of the UDF engaged in it, years after they denounced their democratic positions. Some of them became the members of “Ataka” or were closely cooperating with this party. Probably the most known example is the political career of Petar Beron. Beron was one of the most prominent members of the UDF in its first phase – 1989-1991. Later he joined the Bulgarian Business Bloc, first Bulgarian political party which employed populist manners as a pattern of political struggle. And finally he joined the Coalition ““Ataka””. The other example is Pavel Shopov, who was a leader of one of the member parties of the UDF, the Christian-Democratic Alliance until 1997, to become the deputy-president of “Ataka”. Siderov, as Shopov and Beron, was following the pattern which has probably more to do with political opportunism than the change of his standpoints. Siderov crossed the path from one of the marginalized media representatives of the UDF, to the professional cooperant of the fierce UDF’s political enemy the BSP. After the failure to participate in a newly founded movement of the former tsar, Siderov decided to occupy one of the empty political slots, thus to enter the political scene again. We cannot speculate that the reasons for the Siderov’s current political discourse are based only in political opportunism. But, on the other hand, it is for sure that this change of political path and founding of “Ataka” has much to do with Siderov’s disappointment with the marginalization he experienced in the mainstream political parties in which he was involved.



### 3.4 - Party's Development 2005 – 2008

The official founding of the party “Ataka” happened on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, in order to prepare for the coming parliamentary elections. As Anton Sirakov explained, the registration could not happen earlier because of the new Law on Political Parties which came to power on 1<sup>st</sup> April that year. Still, they had to wait for the approval of party's registration from the court. Therefore, they used the recipe previously applied by Simeon Saksoburgotski. Namely, the leadership of “Ataka” formed a coalition of two small non parliamentary parties, which were already registered and therefore able to participate at the elections. These two parties were Bulgarian National Patriotic Party led by Petar Manolov and National Movement for Salvation of the Fatherland led by Ilija Kirov. Besides them, on the list of “Ataka” were also presented people from other different parties, movements and organizations. For better understanding of the identity of “Ataka”, it would be appropriate to see which ideological groups formed it.

The success of “Ataka” has much to do with their behaviour on the political scene of Bulgaria, and specific communication with its electorate which breaches the threshold of the “politically correct”. Therefore, a part of this sub chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the ways in which “Ataka” presents itself to its electorate.

And finally, during its existence “Ataka” managed to be engaged in four electoral terms: Parliamentary, Presidential, European and Municipal. The performance of “Ataka” at these elections will be also a subject of analysis.

#### 3.4.1 - Sources of the party and fragmentation

**“Ataka” is like a bird with two wings – left and right. There is the phenomenon of “Ataka” – the alliance between left and right nationalists, people, for whom nothing is more important than the future of our nation and state. We proudly say, that we are the vector of the wishes of the former, present and future generations of Bulgarians, that there is no worse disease for us than the blasphemy of our Fatherland of our traitors and foreign villains; if we have contributed our lives to that idea, that is why**

**we are aware of our responsibility for those who will come after us...<sup>50</sup> .**

The various groups which, in initial period, composed the coalition “Ataka”, professor Antony Todorov in the interview classified as the sources of the future party. He identified four basic ideological and interest groups that were crucial for the formation of the coalition in 2005.

1. The first source was the group of people once involved in the creation of the opposition movement at the end of 1980s, the UDF. As professor Todorov pointed out that some of the UDF members became dissatisfied with the UDF politics, probably because it was not enough nationalist for them, or they had expected different kind of reforms. As said before, Volen Siderov himself was the editor in chief of the leading opposition newspaper the *Democracy*. Pavel Shopov, the acting vice president of “Ataka”, was also in the leadership of the early UDF. There were also others who remained in the UDF and later even joined Ivan Kostov's DSB, like the vice president of “Ataka”, Anton Sirakov. One figure who was quite influential in the first period of the UDF, and who joined forces with “Ataka”, was Petar Beron - the secretary of the UDF in the period 1989-1990 and the resident of UDF's council in 1990-1991.

2. The second source was the group of people from the far right parties, which existed during the whole transition period. To an extent, they represented the ideology similar to the present ideology of “Ataka”: anti-Turkish, anti-Roma, suspicious towards the intentions of the West. These parties were the Bulgarian National Patriotic Party and the National Movement for Salvation of the Fatherland, but they never managed to enter the parliament thus remained out from the media discourse. As said before, Siderov used them as a basis for his own political project.

3. The third source was the group of people from the former conservative wing of the Bulgarian Communist Party, which showed very nationalist tendencies in the beginning of the transition. Some of them were involved in the organisation founded at the beginning of the 1990s, the Committee for the defence of the National Interest. This organisation was founded as a reaction to the attempt of the new ruling elite to pacify the political situation in Bulgaria with restitution of the names of Bulgarian Turks.

4. The fourth source was the group of people from the former communist secret services and high ranking military officers. They were worried about the growing political influence of the foreign states (before all the member states of the EU and the USA) on the domestic political scene and the changes that they were bringing. Their organization which became directly involved in the Coalition “Ataka” was “Zashtita”

<sup>50</sup> Leader of “Nova Zora ” Mincho Minchev, explaining the genesis of the idea of “Ataka” - Минчо Минчев, ““Политически клуб “Нова зора” е за проекта Атака”, in Нова Зора, No 23, Juny 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 :<http://www.novazora.net/2005/issue23/index.html> [Retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2008] (translation I.N.)

(Defence) which was led by Mincho Minchev. Previously mentioned Petar Beron got connected to “Ataka” through this organization. The members of “Zashtita” were gathered in the so-called political circle “Zora” (Dawn) which was active from the beginning of transition. Political circle “Zora” was opposing the mainstream political ideas and promoting the resistance to the change which was happening in Europe. This circle later founded the weekly magazine *Nova Zora* which is expressing ideas close to pro-Russian and pro-Soviet views.



Logo of “Zashtita”

In its very beginnings “Ataka” was a coalition of people of different political origins, united under the personality of Volen Siderov. All of them share one characteristic – they were expelled, at one point, and found themselves on the margin of the Bulgarian political scene, and Volen Siderov was the one who brought them back to the political life. The coalition “Ataka” comprised the people of different political orientation, what can be seen from the opening paragraph of this sub chapter. In the text, the author Mincho Minchev from the Political Circle “Dawn” explained the essence of the “Ataka” phenomenon in its beginnings – **the alliance between the left and right nationalists**. But this ideological amalgam started to fall apart shortly after the elections.

### 3.4.2 - Controversial communications

The usual characteristic of the extreme right parties is the employment of specific behaviour, which exceeds the borders of politically correct and differs from other parties. For political party “Ataka” this specific behaviour is characterized in drawing of attention of the media to the party’s activity in an unusual way, through scandals

regarded by majority as outrageous. Intentional or not, the leadership members of the party are constantly under exposure of the public eye due to their behaviour in the Parliament or in the public life.

The best known scandal of Siderov is the so-called “**Trace Highway case**”<sup>51</sup>. The case had happened in April 2006, when Siderov and his fellow MP Pavel Chernov suffered a car accident. Immediately, Volen Siderov proclaimed the accident an attempt of his assassination and started campaigning against the government. In fact, Siderov’s car was pushed out from the track by the car which was driving beside him. The driver of the Siderov’s car got out and cut the tires from the other car and attacked its driver. In order to cover the action of the driver, Pavel Chernov claimed that he was the one who was driving the car. Later, he claimed that Siderov asked him to give such a statement. Anyhow, both of them lost their immunity as the MPs, and the process was started against them for giving the false statement before the court. Siderov claimed that the whole process against him is politically motivated, and continued campaigning through the SKAT television and *Ataka* newspaper against the ruling majority, portraying himself as a victim of the merciless regime.

Second best known case happened in February 2007 when the group of activists of “Ataka” led by Siderov stormed into the headquarters of the newspaper *24 Hours* and weekly magazine *168 Hours* with an intention to publicly punish the journalists from the editorial board. During February these two paper media published two articles where they claimed that Siderov had taken a bribe from the members of the MRF. Followed by cameras, Siderov and his comrades broke in to the offices and made a live performance for the audience in Bulgaria, almost like live punishment of criminals. Siderov later claimed that his intention was to speak to the journalists that have written the mentioned articles, but from the recording it was obvious that it was not so<sup>52</sup>. The reaction of the public was fierce, but it just caused that Siderov got more media attention. Again, “Ataka” presented themselves as the victims of the campaign of the regime media, which cannot be stopped by legal means. Therefore, the official explanation was that they have to draw attention to this fact.



Dimitar Stoyanov and Volen Siderov

51 Сибина Кърстева, „Катастрофата на Атака“, in Капитал, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2006, pp. 18-19

52 Николета Попкостадинова, „Недоволен“, in Капитал, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2007, p. 30



The step-son of Volen Siderov, Dimitar Stoyanov came into the focus of the public attention after the scandal in the EP. In September 2006, The Parliament Journal (an official journal of the EP had a competition for the Member of the European Parliament (further in the text MEP) of the year. One of the nominees was the MEP from Hungaria, of Roma origin Livia Jàròka. Dimitar Stoyanov, who was at the time the observer MEP of Bulgaria reacted in a bad manner. He sent the circular e-mail to the other MEPs in which he explained why he disagrees with the possible election of Livia Jàròka for the MEP of the year. He said the following:

*Well, gentlemen, I must disagree with you. In my country there're tens of thousands gypsy girls way more beautiful than this honourable one. In fact if you're in the right place on the right time you even can buy one (around 12-13 years old) to be your loving wife. The best of them are very expensive – up to 5,000 euros a piece, wow! Of course this is a crime according to the Penal code, Chapter Four (Crimes against the marriage, the family and the youth), Section II (Crimes against the youth), Article 191/3, punishable with 2 to 5 years of imprisonment, but I don't think that most of the so-called “Roma rights organizations” even know about this article, and they in fact don't care (call them what you want, they care only about anti-discrimination laws' articles, because they pay, and crime doesn't you now)!!! This is another story though.*

*So let's get back to Miss Laroka's nomination. Believe me, I've seen lots of gypsy women, but all that are at her age are much skinnier. Doesn't she sharing the terrible suffering her people are bearing all around Europe, the poverty, the miserable conditions and the unemployment???? Well, I guess when you're an MEP you have to put some weight on you. Have to look serious.<sup>53</sup>*

The reaction from the other MEPs came immediately. He and his party were qualified as racist and xenophobic, and that they and their media (television SKAT and the daily newspaper Ataka) are spreading hatred towards the Jews, Roma and Turks<sup>54</sup>. Some of the MEPs asked for measures against Stoyanov in both European and Bulgarian Parliament, even to remove him from the place of the observer MEP. Later Stoyanov apologised to all the deputies expressing his regret to Jàròka and to all the others who felt offended by his e-mail. Anton Sirakov in the interview explained that

53 Els de Groen, European Parliament Goes Bananas over Bad Joke, <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/1390> [Retrieved 15th May, 2008]

54 Колектив аутора, “Атака направи расистки скандал в Страсбург”, in Дневник, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 <http://evropa.dnevnik.bg/show/index.php?storyid=284572>: [Retrieved 15th May, 2008]

the real intention of Stoyanov was to point out to the MEPs about the bad and anti-human conditions in which Roma people live Bulgaria, and that that is more important of electing of some MEP of Roma origin for the MEP of the year.

Scandals and unusual behaviour are obviously a significant part of “Ataka”’s identity in which they outline the difference between them and the other parties. With it, “Ataka” underlines their absolute non-acceptance of the official political discourse, and form a picture that scandals are the only way in which they can break the “imposed media isolation”. Thus a specific message is transmitted to the potential electorate with negating competence of the state officials, other parties’ political discourses and the values promoted by the EU.

On the other hand, this kind of behaviour offers another explanation, except creating an image of a rebel anti-system party. “Ataka”’s anti-system discourse cannot be employed without being constantly in the focus of the media. As Vladimir Shopov outlined, Volen Siderov is a man who knows the media well and how they can be used in the best way for the party promotion. When describing his behaviour in the parliament, Shopov said that Siderov uses the Parliament as a stage where he performs for his audience. Due to a fact that they cannot offer consistent political platform which would effect in the efficient policy proposals and constructive critique of the government’s policy, “Ataka” is employing specific methodology which comprises scandals and unusual rhetoric which draws to them a constant attention of the media. In this way, “Ataka” manages to stay in focus of the public attention, and to influence the mobilization of its potential electorate.

### 3.4.3 - Electoral terms

As it was said before, in the theory of the political sciences one party is considered as established when it passes three national parliamentary elections<sup>55</sup>. “Ataka” exists just for three years and at that time it managed to pass three (four) elections, with quite a success. In the following text their electoral campaigns and the elections’ results will be analysed, in the context of their political discourse and party’s potentials for the future.

## Parliamentary elections 2005 – “Cancer in the parliament”

The Coalition “Ataka” in the eve of the Parliamentary elections in 2005 was not in the focus of the attention of the mainstream media. All of the agencies for market and

55 Vladimir Goati, Borbe u Srbiji u postoktobarskom razdoblju, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Beograd, 2006, p. 26

social research were projecting that only established parties would enter the Parliament and that for Siderov and his comrades there was barely any chance. Mainstream media were not interested to comment the candidacy of one option with heavy chances for success. On the other hand, the television SKAT gave resources and full support to “Ataka”, as it was outlined before. The whole campaign was based on the content of what Siderov was speaking about every single day on his TV show – some of the goals were sublimated in their programmatic document “20 principles”.

*The outcome of the elections was quite surprising:*

#### Results of the Bulgarian Parliamentary elections 2005<sup>56</sup>

Party or coalition	Number of votes	Percentage	MPs
Coalition for Bulgaria (BSP+ smaller parties)	1 129 196	31,0%	82
NMSS	725 314	19,9%	53
MRF	467 400	12,8%	34
<b>Coalition "Ataka"</b>	<b>296 848</b>	<b>8,2%</b>	<b>21</b>
UDF	280 323	7,7%	20
DSB	234 788	6,5%	17
Bulgarian Peoples Alliance (IMRO+BZNS )	189 268	5,2%	13

Table 1

As it was expected, the BSP and their coalition won the elections with 31% of the votes. Simeon’s party lost almost a half of the votes from the elections in 2001. The MRF also got another 100 000 votes which enable them to take almost 13%. The separated wing of the NMSS, the New Time did not manage to pass the threshold of 4%.

But the real surprise was the “Ataka”’s success, since the last attempt of Volen Siderov to engage in politics ended poorly. Anyhow, the future ruling coalition was quite predictable, since the BSP and the MRF already in the pre-election period marked each other as future partners in the Government.

On the opening session of the Parliament, Volen Siderov marked the cornerstones

<sup>56</sup> Data from the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Bulgaria <http://www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html>

of the “Ataka”’s politics in the future. He attacked the MRF and the former government for corruption and betrayal of the national interests. But more importantly, he outlined that “Ataka” is there to stay and that “the course of history has changed with the entrance of “Ataka” to the Bulgarian National Parliament”<sup>57</sup>

The results of the elections showed that the stabilization of the political system is far from its materialization. The entrance of populism to the Bulgarian political scene with Simeon Saksoburgotski on the previous elections did not prove to be a temporary phenomenon – the parties of the historic right, the UDF and the BSP did not manage to form a stable alternative to both the ruling majority and the BSP. Moreover, the political scene became even more fragmented on the right with the appearance of the anti-system, nationalist discourse personalized in “Ataka”.



Volen Siderov and Anton Sirakov on the rally of Ataka

#### Presidential elections 2006 - “Le Penn effect in the Eastern Europe”

The following year, “Ataka” got the chance to prove that they were not just one time miracle party on the Presidential elections in the October. The favourite was, then reigning president of the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov. At the right part of the political scene, two candidates appeared as potential candidates for the second round: Nedelcho Beronov and Volen Siderov. Nedelcho Beronov was a candidate supported by the so-called historic right parties the UDF, the DSB and the Democratic Party.

If reading the writings of Siderov from various paper media from that time (some of them published in his book *My Battle for Bulgaria*) one cannot escape the feeling that Volen Siderov started to prepare for the presidential campaign almost a year before the elections. Siderov was campaigning against the acting president Georgi Parvanov from the October 2005. He was constantly underlining the weak sides of Parvanov

<sup>57</sup> Волен Сидеров, *opt.cit.*,p.3



as a president, from the point of view of “Ataka”’s political platform. Parvanov was described as the man who was betraying his principles and previous standpoints. For example, Parvanov was the man who organized the demonstrations against the NATO bombing of the FR Yugoslavia in 1999 and later he and his party were the ones who allowed the establishing of three NATO bases in Bulgaria and who are supporting NATO’s aggressive politics in the world (pointing out an issue of sending of Bulgarian soldiers to Iraq). For Siderov and his comrades, Parvanov symbolises the national treason of Bulgarian interest with his close cooperation with the officials of the MRF. They accused him for allowing the formation of the new Government and thus active support of the “Turkization” Bulgaria, which became “obvious” when he gave the medal “Old Mountain” (the highest ranking states honour) to Ahmed Dogan for his contribution for building of the democracy and preserving of the peace.



Poster of Volen Siderov from the Presidential elections 2006

Except for the anti-Parvanov message, the rest of the campaign of Siderov was, to a large extent, similar to the election campaign of “Ataka” on the previous parliamentary elections. The themes like anti-NATO, Turkish menace in Bulgaria and Gypsy criminals, Constitutional changes, Referendums on important state questions, Koslodui Nuclear power plant, and anti-corruption platform became classical issues that “Ataka” was addressing. Siderov presented himself as the future president who would be elected by the people “who are thinking with their own heads and not for kebabs and beer, coming with the buses from Turkey because of their allegiance to the party”<sup>58</sup>.

The results of the first round were:

58 Recording of Volen Siderov commercial for Presidential elections uploaded on V-box web site <http://www.vbox7.com/play:768d456b>

### First round of the Bulgarian presidential elections 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2006<sup>59</sup>

Candidates for the President and vice President	Nomination	Votes	%
Georgi Parvanov Angel Marin	Initiative comitee-supported by the BSP	1,780,119	64,04%
<b>Volen Siderov Pavel Shopov</b>	<b>"Ataka"</b>	<b>597,175</b>	<b>21,48%</b>
Nedelcho Beronov Juliana Nikolova	Initiative committee – supported by the UDF, the DSB and the DS	271,078	9.75%
Ljuben Petrov Neli Topalova	Initiative committee	13,854	0.49%
Grigor Velev Jordan Mutafchiev	Union of Bulgarian Nationalists “Whole Bulgaria”	19,857	0,71%
Petar Beron Stela Bankova	Initiative committee	21,812	0.785%
Georgi Markov Maria Ivanova	Order, Lawfullnes, Justice	7, 478	2.716%

Table 2

Volen Siderov got more than double the number of votes of his party on the previous elections. Foreign observers and media in the country looked at it as a repeat of the Le Penn phenomenon in France, but this time in South-Eastern Europe. The entrance of Siderov to the second round also marked the absolute defeat of the historic right parties as an alternative to both the left and “Ataka”.

But, similarly like in France, now almost all of the political forces in the country joined their forces in support of Parvanov in the second round. Even the president of the European Peoples Party called the Bulgarian members of this party federation to give an active support to reigning president of Bulgaria. All the mainstream media were campaigning against Siderov. Thus it created the referendum atmosphere, where people were voting for and against Volen Siderov. The results of the second round were:

### Second round of the Bulgarian presidential elections 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2006<sup>60</sup>

Candidates for the President and vice President	Nomination	Votes	%
Georgi Parvanov Angel Marin	Initiative comitee-supported by the BSP	2,050,488	75.948%
<b>Volen Siderov Pavel Shopov</b>	<b>"Ataka"</b>	<b>649387</b>	<b>24.052%</b>

Table 3

59 Source - Central Election Committee [http://www.izbori2006.org/results\\_1/index.html](http://www.izbori2006.org/results_1/index.html)

60 Source Central Election Committee [http://www.izbori2006.org/results\\_2/](http://www.izbori2006.org/results_2/)

After the elections, Siderov and “Ataka” launched the series of accusations against the governing elite that the elections were robbed in favour of Parvanov<sup>61</sup>. Their remarks were based on unfavourable treatment of Siderov in the national media. Secondly, as Anton Sirakov pointed out, the most important breaching of the Law was with the so-called tourist voting of Bulgarian Turks who are living in Turkey. According to Sirakov, Parvanov had an agreement with the MRF which secured a victory of Parvanov. Despite these accusations Parvanov got 3 times more votes than Siderov. The conclusions that can be drawn are the following:

- In any case these elections were quite useful for “Ataka”, since they helped them to prove their influence in the electorate and to secure it. With the constant downfall of the electoral support for the NMSS and the historic right parties “Ataka” was slowly becoming the second strongest party in the country, nevertheless that their electoral potential was probably reached with the Siderov’s result.
- The elections proved that all other parties are not ready to legitimise the existence of “Ataka” and its political discourse. They rather opted to join around one common standpoint, the European values and thus support the candidate of the left.

## European elections 2007

After the accession of Bulgaria to the EU, a new political spectre of activity had been opened to the Bulgarian politicians and political parties. Eighteen observer MEPs, now became the temporary MEPs, until the elections for the EP. It was foreseen that the partial elections for the EP will be held during 2007 when country adopts necessary legislation. In the case of Bulgaria the Law on the election of the MEP in the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted on the 8<sup>th</sup> March<sup>62</sup>, thus the first elections for the EP were appointed for the 20<sup>th</sup> May that year.

“Ataka” already had one MEP, controversial Dimitar Stoyanov, whose presence in the EP enabled the creation of the group of far right parties. Logically, the electoral platform of “Ataka” was quite similar: equality of nations in the EU, protection of the Christian foundations of Europe, equality of national economies, blocking of plans for the European Super State, renegotiating with the EU certain aspects of the EU accession treaty like the closing of the four blocs of the Koslodui Nuclear power plant etc.

<sup>61</sup> Интервю с Волен Сидеров, Битката няма да е лесна, но не трябва да губим увереност в себе си, in Атака, Sofia, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2006, p. 1

<sup>62</sup> Law on the election of the MEP in the Republic of Bulgaria - <http://lex.bg/laws/ldoc.php?IDNA=2135545857> [Retrieved 24th April, 2008]



The poster of “Ataka” for the European elections 2007

Anyhow, “Ataka” offered one quite interesting campaign, in which the accent was given to the question of the possible accession of Turkey to the EU. Some of their advertisement materials were banned on the national television because of the politically incorrect words and paroles. Their material presented the images of the centres of major European capitals: Rome, London, Paris, Berlin with the symbols of these cities (like Big Ben or the Eiffel tower) turned into minarets of the giant mosques<sup>63</sup>. The motto of the whole campaign was “To stop the turbans today – not with the national traitors” which implies that not just Bulgaria, but the whole Europe is a subject under Turkish danger. On the other hand, one cannot escape the impression that the whole campaign was actually directed towards the domestic positions of “Ataka”, and these elections were used just to strengthen the position of the party within its possible electorate.



Poster from the European elections 2006. On the left stand Petar Hlebarov, Slavcho Binev, Volen Siderov, Dimitar Stoyanov, Desislav Chukolov

<sup>63</sup> Forbidden commercial on the official web site of “Ataka”, <http://www.Ataka.bg/images/gallery/v2/vgallery.htm>



In the media "Ataka" was promoting the following candidates for the MEPs who were the first four on the list: Dimitar Stoyanov, Slavcho Binev, Desislav Chukolov and Petar Hlebarov. The results of the elections were as following:

#### The results of the elections for the European Parliament in Bulgaria 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2007<sup>64</sup>

Parties	Votes	%	Seats in the EP
CEDB	420, 001	21,68%	5
BSP	414, 786	21,41%	5
MRF	392, 650	20, 26 %	4
"Ataka"	<b>275, 273</b>	<b>14, 20 %</b>	<b>3</b>
NMSS	121,398	6,27%	1

Table 4

Several conclusions could be drawn from the results of the elections:

1. As first, these elections showed the general weakness like in the most of the EU member states which is that the citizens are not showing the great amount of interest for these elections – the turnout was just 28.6%.

2. Secondly, the space which appeared with the slow decline of the historic right Bulgarian parties, the UDF and the DSB and with the decline of the NMSS was now filled with the new party of the mayor of Sofia, Boyko Borisov, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (further in the text CDEB). Clearly, the right wing voters did not perceive "Ataka" as the possible substitute for the DSB, UDF or NMSS.

3. Thirdly, due to their ability to mobilize easily their electorate "Ataka" managed to be fourth at the elections, but that also proved that this party did not show the substantial rise in the number of votes.

4. Fourthly, the support of the MRF in the Bulgarian electorate was not that much dependant on the votes of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey, as "Ataka" was presenting it. The difference in number of votes between the elections for the EP and the Parliamentary elections in 2005 is around 70 000, and the MRF managed to stay the third political force in Bulgaria. "Ataka"'s claims that the MRF strength comes mainly because of the support of Ankara, does not stand.

As we can see from the table, on these elections "Ataka" got 3 EMPs: Dimitar Stoyanov, Slavcho Binev and Desislav Chukolov.

### Municipal elections 2007

Municipal elections showed that "Ataka" had kept its positions within its electorate, but nothing more than that. No significant improvement happened. As it was visible after the European elections, "Ataka" did not manage to surpass the negative references towards it and to become a right alternative to the BSP. Instead of it, a new party of the old-new mayor of Sofia Boyko Borisov – the CEDB- showed a tendency to occupy the place once held by the UDF and later the NMSS.

At these elections "Ataka"'s candidates for the mayors were not necessarily the old, established members of the party. For the elections in Sofia, "Ataka" employed one of its newest members -Slavcho Binev, a controversial businessman who was already one of the "Ataka"'s deputies in the EP. In the town where "Ataka" was usually getting most of the votes, Burgas, a candidate for the mayor was Valeri Simonov, the owner of the television SKAT.

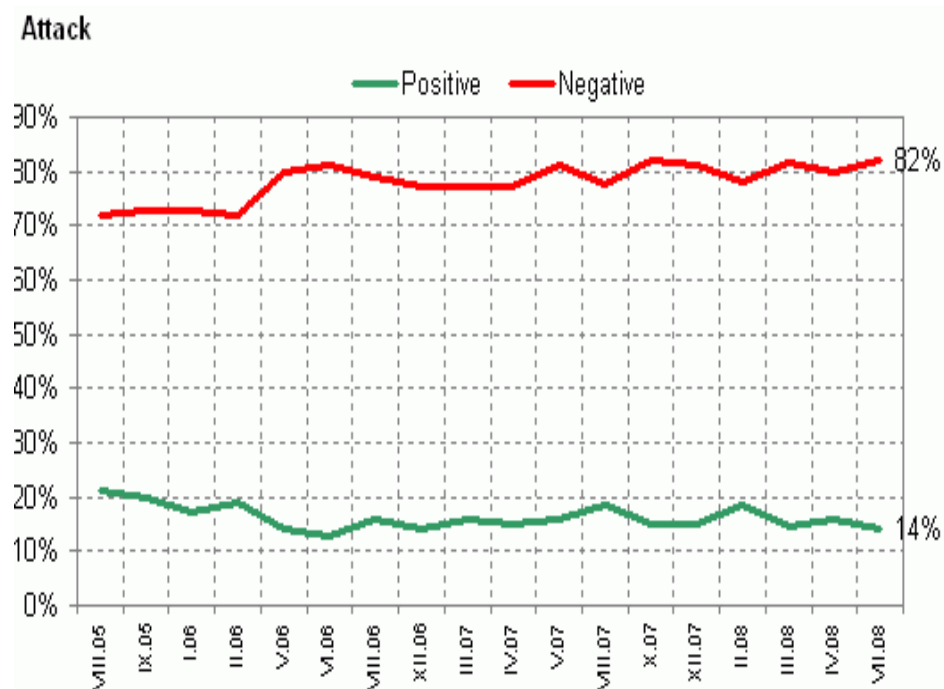
In any case, "Ataka" did not change its rhetoric or the message for these elections. The scale of politics was indeed lower but the choice of topics still remained the same: Bulgarian Turks, Roma, corruption at the local level etc. An interesting aspect of these elections are the local coalitions that were supposed to be formed in those municipalities where the MRF always had the majority of votes, due to the fragmentation of the ethnic Bulgarian votes. Coalitions were supposed to combine Bulgarian right parties: UDF, DSB, IMRO, and even CEDB with "Ataka" and against the MRF. Still, none of these coalitions were formed, mostly because of the theatrical rhetorics of "Ataka". In its media "Ataka", SKAT television and *Ataka* newspaper, in the focus of attention were Slavi Binev and Valeri Simonov. The party employed the same kind of campaign as before. And the results were much similar,



Poster of Slavcho Binev during his campaign for the post of Mayor of Sofia

64 Source :<http://www.izbori2007.eu/activity/index.html>

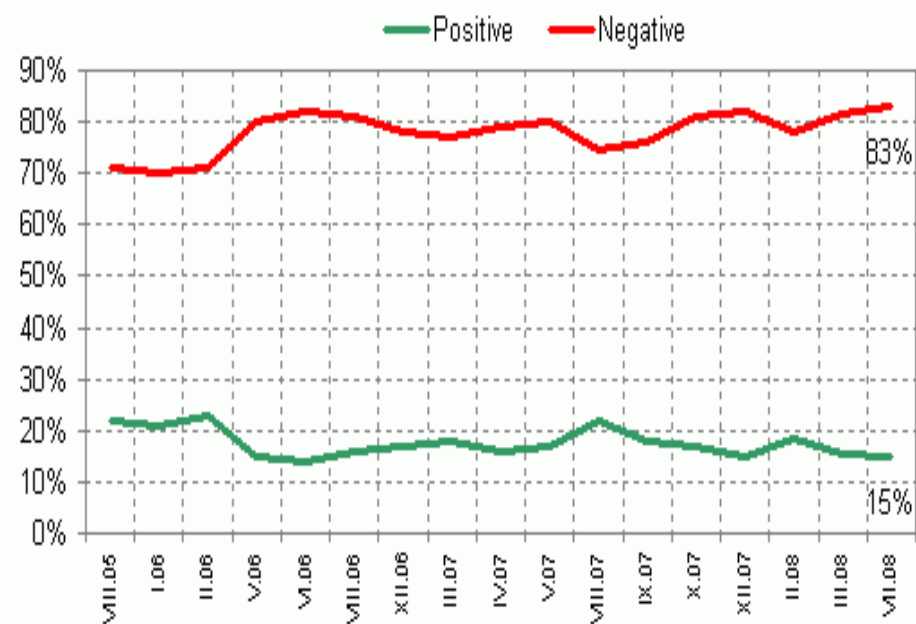
“Ataka” achieved the biggest success in the towns on the Black Sea coast, Burgas and Varna but also in some inland towns like Stara Zagora and Ruse. In major towns, like Sofia and Plovdiv, “Ataka” did not manage to pass modest 5%.



Graph 1

Popularity of the political party “Ataka” 2005-2008 (Alpha Research)<sup>65</sup>

Volen Siderov - Leader of Attack



Graph 2

Popularity of Volen Siderov 2005-2008 (Alpha Research)<sup>66</sup>

65 <http://www.aresearch.org/parties.html> [Retrieved 22nd June, 2008]

66 <http://www.aresearch.org/figures.html>[Retrieved 22nd June, 2008]

Vote Intentions	VIII.2005	IX.2005	XII.2005	I.2006	II.2006	IV.2006	V.2006	VI.2006	VIII.2006	XI.2006	I.2007	III.2007	IV.2007	VI.2007	VIII.2007	IX.2007	XI.2007	I.2008	II.2008	IV.2008	V.2008	VI.2008	VII.2008		
BSP	23,0%	25,5%	24,3%	22,9%	23,5%	19,4%	21,4%	21,1%	23,3%	27,5%	25,5%	25,3%	20,1%	17,0%	17,5%	17,8%	16,8%	18,2%	19,2%	20,0%	18,0%	17,3%	17,3%	16,9%	13,2%
IMSS	12,2%	10,8%	9,7%	9,4%	8,6%	5,2%	4,8%	4,6%	5,1%	3,3%	2,8%	3,8%	3,9%	4,4%	3,6%	2,6%	3,3%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	2,0%	2,8%	2,0%	1,8%	1,8%
Attack	10,3%	8,7%	7,2%	7,9%	9,1%	6,0%	6,0%	5,7%	4,6%	8,9%	7,4%	7,8%	6,5%	5,6%	6,4%	6,7%	7,5%	5,0%	5,7%	5,1%	6,1%	5,7%	6,0%	6,1%	6,1%
MRF	9,3%	8,3%	6,0%	6,5%	7,0%	7,5%	6,7%	6,7%	6,4%	7,1%	6,9%	7,6%	8,6%	6,7%	6,8%	6,9%	7,8%	7,1%	7,0%	6,9%	7,1%	6,8%	6,5%	6,7%	6,2%
UDF	5,2%	6,5%	5,0%	4,5%	3,5%	4,2%	4,0%	4,2%	4,5%	4,1%	3,3%	3,5%	3,4%	3,1%	2,3%	2,4%	2,6%	1,9%	1,6%	2,2%	2,4%	3,0%	3,4%	2,8%	2,6%
DSB	2,7%	3,0%	2,9%	2,5%	2,8%	2,4%	3,2%	3,3%	2,3%	1,8%	1,0%	1,1%	1,5%	1,5%	0,6%	1,2%	0,9%	1,6%	1,2%	1,2%	1,1%	1,6%	1,6%	1,8%	1,5%
BIU	2,8%	2,5%	1,5%	1,5%	1,5%	1,1%	1,1%	1,1%	0,9%	0,6%	0,7%	0,6%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
IMRO	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0,8%	1,0%	1,3%	1,4%	1,3%	1,0%	1,0%	1,5%	1,1%	1,2%	1,0%	.
GERB	.	.	.	.	.	14,4%	12,4%	15,6%	14,2%	7,8%	14,2%	13,6%	12,3%	13,9%	21,1%	22,5%	22,2%	26,0%	27,6%	24,6%	27,6%	26,5%	26,7%	23,2%	21,7%
BID	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0,9%	0,5%	0,5%	0,3%	.
Other	1,3%	2,2%	4,5%	5,6%	5,6%	1,7%	2,5%	2,6%	1,2%	3,8%	3,9%	2,7%	3,9%	1,7%	3,0%	2,1%	2,6%	2,0%	2,3%	3,9%	2,2%	1,9%	2,1%	2,3%	2,7%
I will not vote	33,0%	32,5%	38,9%	39,2%	38,4%	38,1%	37,9%	35,1%	37,5%	35,1%	34,3%	34,0%	39,8%	46,1%	37,9%	36,8%	35,0%	34,8%	32,2%	33,0%	32,3%	32,0%	32,8%	36,7%	42,9%

Table 5

Vote intentions 2005-2008 (Alpha Research)<sup>67</sup>

From the performance of “Ataka” on the four electoral terms, it is possible to draw few conclusions.

- “Ataka” has established its electorate and it is quite stable. As we can see from the graphs the popularity of Volen Siderov and “Ataka” is in the range from 16 to 22 % as possible maximum of support. The actual popularity of “Ataka”, in terms of supporters who would vote at the elections for this party, never exceeded 9.5%. So the possible reservoir exists, but it is not sufficient for “Ataka” to become the second biggest party in the country as they were hoping. Success of Volen Siderov was just a temporary one, due to the fact that there was no other strong candidate of the strong right orientated party. The question is what would have happened if someone from CEDB or Boiko Borisov himself had been candidates.

- Regardless of the type of the elections, the mobilization of its electorate is constantly high in comparison to the rest of the political scene. All other parties faced lower turnouts in elections which could be regarded of minor importance for the future of the citizens, like the municipal and European elections. The only other party which can be seen as the equivalent in the possibility to mobilize the electorate for the elections is the MRF.

- “Ataka” is ready to employ new aspects in its political discourse, regarding

67 <http://www.aresearch.org/electoral.html> [Retrieved 22nd June, 2008]



the European electoral scene. It has successfully drawn the parallels with political platforms of the other European far right parties, regarding the issue of the Turkish accession to the EU, defence of the Christian roots of the Union, and reforming of the EU to the Europe of Nations. It could be expected that the issues which would probably appear as important in few years, like the immigration and foreigners, would become a part of the political discourse of “Ataka”.

• From everything said above, it can be concluded that “Ataka” is not a one day phenomenon. In the past few years this party managed to stabilize its electorate and to spread its structure throughout Bulgaria. It has successfully passed four electoral terms, to an extent that at one moment it was seen as the second political force in the country, but it was proved that it was just a consequence of the fragmentation of the Bulgarian political system. Also, the party showed the ability to successfully incorporate new issues in its political discourse, thus to open new sources for the popular support. Yet, without changing and approaching the mainstream political issues “Ataka” would probably remain closed in electoral shell, and its maximum would not exceed the number of votes that Volen Siderov got on the presidential elections. Also, it could be expected that none of the other parties would accept “Ataka” for a possible political partner on the national level. Hence, it would probably remain a relatively small parliamentary party, as most of the West European far right parties.

### 3.5 - Electorate of “Ataka”

The electorate is an important element of the political identity of one party. If the programme and other internal documents explain the self-identification of the party regarding the goals desired to be achieved, than the party’s electorate is the corpus of citizens who identify themselves partially or as whole with these ideas. Thus the reaction of the electorate over time influences the shaping of new ideas or redefinition of the old, contributing to the constant polishing of the party’s profile. The electorate of the party can be than defined as the sociological foundation of the party. For the phenomenon of “Ataka”, the electorate is crucial, due to the fact that the appearance of such a radical discourse had to have its basis among the masses. In other words, the people who are ready to accept the message defined in such a way.

The usual picture that the political elite and scholars have about the electorate of “Ataka” is that it is generally composed of the low-educated plebs, the lowest strata of the Bulgarian population – that could be denoted with the term blue collars. Or socially endangered like pensioners. In other words, people who cannot understand the values of

the modern society because they are left to exist on its margins. But is it really like that? Professor Anthony Todorov in the interview expressed an opinion that the electorate of “Ataka” is composed of the people who generally perceive themselves as losers. This self-imagination comes from the feeling that their social status (although most of the time corresponding to the average) is far from their capabilities or value. Their inner dissatisfaction culminated with realising that the transition project is over (in 2004 Bulgaria accessed the NATO and it was scheduled that it will become a member of the EU in 2007), so the choice was to support a party which denies the whole process of transition and the system of values that was introduced during it.

Firstly, I would like to present a research performed the Gallup Bulgaria immediately after the Parliamentary elections in 2005 about the characteristics of the “Ataka”’s voters<sup>68</sup>:

Gender	Predominantly males – around 9.1% of all males
Age	Most numerous group – between 30 to 40 years - 8.4% of all
Education	Predominantly secondary school, but also 8.5% of people with the high education and 11.2% of pupils
Social Group	Predominantly employed – 8.7% of all, 4.4% of unemployed
Material situation	“I live very hard” – 9.2% of all of this group “I live on the edge of existence” – 7,6% of this group “I live normally” – 6.3% of all of this group “I live good” – 4.2% of all of this group
Former voters of	21.9% voted for small parties 11.9% of abstinent 11% voted for “Giergoveden – IMRO” 9% voted for NMSS 5% voted for UDF 3.8% voted for the DSB

Table 6

The research shows that the electorate of “Ataka” has much more various backgrounds that it would be expected according to the previously expressed opinions of the scholars. Still, there is no real coherent study about the electorate of “Ataka” on the whole territory of Bulgaria. But there is one interesting research which can give us more precise picture of why certain strata(s) of the Bulgarian society sympathises “Ataka” and its political discourse. The research was performed by the team led by Professor Evgenija Ivanova from the Department for Political Sciences from the New Bulgarian University on the three locations, where “Ataka” got the majority of votes in two electoral terms. The importance of professor Ivanova’s research is that it presents three types of personality of a potential voter of “Ataka”. Moreover, they found that there are three basic types of motivation which would drive people to vote for this party.

68 Евгения Иванова (Eds.), op.cit, p. 12

The research was performed during 2006 in three towns: Ruse, Zlatica and Nesebar where “Ataka”’s results were the highest, at the Parliamentary elections 2005. The team tried to discover the reasons for the motivation of the parts of population to vote for “Ataka” and, consequently, which groups of the electorate are voting for them. Even the earliest opinion polls about the electorate of “Ataka” showed quite surprising results: the majority of people who are supporting “Ataka” are mid-educated and working people<sup>69</sup>. The researchers, despite all of the obstacles to define the typology of the motivation managed to extract three basic types of motivation of “Ataka”’s electorate: social, political and nationalistic:

**1. Jealousy, dissatisfaction and poverty:** Social motivation is certainly the strongest type. After the start of the privatization process, the protective role of the state diminished. The products were deep social cleavages within the population with the small percentage of rich and the rest of population relatively poor. Thus it is perceived by many, at the moment when the accession to the EU finished, that only the rich would be able to “swim” in this new system and the poor would be left to rot. This kind of perception of the future gives birth to social anger - which is extremely high in the smaller communities (like the town of Nesebar). In such communities it is much easier to identify the members of the “newly enriched class”, once belonging to the same social status as everyone else in the communist times. “Ataka” with their promise for the more efficient courts is a guarantee of “extra profit cases” revision. The other type of social motivation is produced by the process of privatization in the country. The process itself was perceived as unjust by the majority of the population, or due to the privatization scandals that had followed it, or because of disrespect of the privatization contracts by the foreign investors. Some of the enterprises were ruined; in other the majority of workers lost their jobs. Therefore, the programme of “Ataka” “Clean hands” certainly does comply with the wishes of the part of population, who did not manage to overcome the structural changes in the economy of the country – in the sense that they remained unemployed or that their present job is not satisfactory. The third type of social motivation is the dependency on the state social and pension fund. The pensioners and the poor are the ones whose social status was in greatest danger during the whole transition period. They are linked to “Ataka”’s promises about the reforming of the social care and pension funds.

**2. More active state:** Second type of motivation is political. The previous motivation makes stronger the desire for more active role of a state in the lives of the citizens<sup>70</sup>. Some citizens perceive the whole transition process as the gradual disappearance of the state, which lets the criminals and national traitors to do what ever they want. There is no more law and order, and they are longing for the paternalistic

69 Евгения Иванова, opt.cit., p. 5

70 Евгения Иванова, opt.cit., p. 6

type of personality which would establish it, some one like Pinochet<sup>71</sup>. The demand for the more efficient courts, social funds and other aspects made “Ataka” a potential choice for this kind of electorate, and Volen Siderov, a possible paternalist figure.

**3. Minorities and separatist:** The third type of motivation is the nationalist one. It is a motivation caused by the fear from the Roma, Turks and foreigners. The basic fear in some regions comes from Roma who are organized into Mafia groups. At the same time, the Roma are presented by the EU and foreigners as an endangered group thus receiving from them endless amounts of money from the foreign institutions. This image is strengthened by the political engagement of the most powerful Roma like Cvetelin Kanchev, who was emphasized in the public proclamations of “Ataka” as the symbol of “Gypsy criminals”. In the other regions, Turks are perceived as the greatest problem, because in the areas with the dominant Turkish population all economic and political life runs through the interest net of the MRF. During its existence, the party of Ahmed Dogan successfully built the clientèle network in these areas through which they control the major part of the ethnic Turkish electorate in Bulgaria. As a consequence, ethnic Bulgarians in these areas feel unrest, dissatisfaction and insecurity. As professor Mihail Ivanov had underlined in his interview – this kind of praxis is giving birth to social unrest, which transforms to the ethnic unrest and hatred. Foreigners as potential enemies are perceived in somehow blurred images of people who wish to control Bulgaria and make Bulgarian people poorer. Inevitably the personifications of these strangers are the Jews.

These three types of motivation to vote for “Ataka” are characteristic of the three basic types of “Ataka”’s electorate:

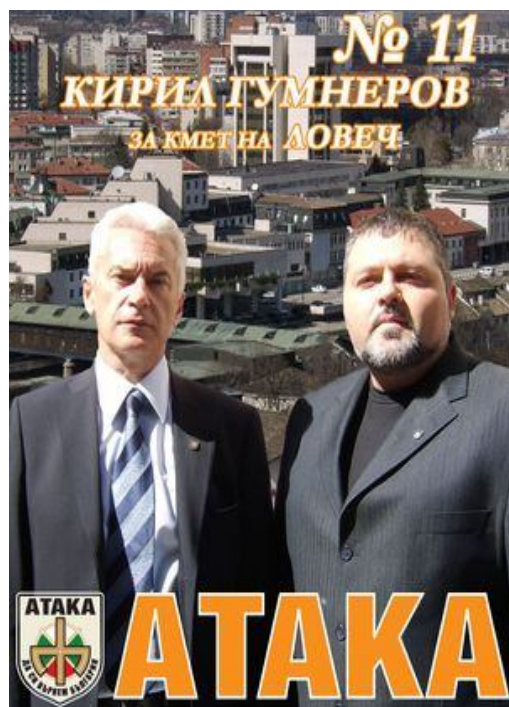
1. The first type are the so-called **Biographical Communists** - People who were formerly members or the low ranking officials of the Bulgarian Communist Party, or at least the supporters of strong influence of the state in the lives of ordinary people. One general characteristic of these people could be drawn – they are predominantly pro-Russian and anti-Western. They remember without any reluctance the communist times, as the time of equality.

2. The second type are the so-called **Biographical Nationalists**. This group is predominantly composed of the descendants of the people who lived in Macedonia and Eastern Trace before the 1920s. After these regions were conquered either by Greeks or by Turks, their forefathers became refugees and came to Bulgaria proper. They inherited a certain type of image of the other, especially the image of Turks, the worst enemies of Bulgaria and Bulgarians. With certain amount of pride, some of them are pointing out the examples from the “glorious past” or how the Bulgarians should deal with the Turks, the “five century Bulgar-slayer”.

71 Евгения Иванова, opt.cit., p.7



3. The third type are the **“people of the middle – who are living on the edge of existence”**- this is the group of people who perceive themselves as general losers of the transition process. Nevertheless, some of them have a quite normal living standard for Bulgaria (professor Badzakov claims that in Bulgaria a relatively rich middle class, which comprises around 35% of citizens, exists and that some parts of the “Ataka”’s electorate are from this status group). In the group of losers here are counted the pensioners, the unemployed or the people who lost their previous status. This group is usually full of anger towards the members of the ruling political elite, so called “friendly groups” and members of all Governments from 1990 until today. Some of them are the former members of the parties that carried the transition process in the country, but lately became disillusioned with their politics. For these people, political parties are the symbol of the corruption in the country. The solution is *the strong hand rule – person with dictatorial powers* which would clean the country of all the polluted elements (like one of the interviewed underlined – Pinochet). Nationalism is not necessarily their primary motivation why they vote for “Ataka”.



Poster from the local elections 2007

The results of the research and the survey prove that in fact “Ataka” has a much more dispersed electoral basis - the simplification about the *blue collar* origin of the phenomenon simply does not hold the ground. Hence, “Ataka” possesses that what Ernesto Laclau calls heterogeneous mass, which is being identified and thus unified with the populist and extremist discourse of “Ataka”. Origin of the voters of “Ataka” is conditioned by acceptance of the parts of “Ataka”’s message – for some that is a part about corruption, the others about the helping socially weak strata, for the third that is the nationalistic anti-minority rhetoric - patchwork programme which could potentially

satisfy any person with extremist views. Furthermore, *Ataka* attracts intellectuals who, like Volen Siderov, were not originally part of an extremist agenda. Perfect example is Petar Beron, prominent Bulgarian scholar and the former UDF’s prominent member. This people lost their chance to be engaged within some other more center party, so they have decided to make a return as withing the political option offered by *Ataka*. Nevertheless, the most of intellectuals avoided *Ataka*, or voted for them without publically expressing their opinion.

### 3.6 - “Ataka” and the Bulgarian political scene

The anti-system political platform and rhetoric of “Ataka” caused its peculiar positioning on the scene. By denying the whole transition process and criticising all previous governments since the downfall of communism, “Ataka” became an “ugly duckling” of the Bulgarian political scene, an unwanted partner in and out of the National Parliament. In this sub-chapter “Ataka”’s profile in the context of the development of the Bulgarian political scene will be presented, as well as the bipolar relations with the other parties, its ambiguities, denial and will for cooperation. Of particular interest is “Ataka”’s relation with the newly founded party of Boyko Borisov, the CEDB, as the representative of the third wave of populism in the country. The relations with the parties will be commented from the standpoint of current rhetoric of “Ataka” and its political programme.

#### 3.6.1 - “Ataka” in context of the change of the Bulgarian political scene

The formation of the Bulgarian political scene was to an extent peculiar. The development of the political party system is possible to make a distinction of four different periods in which a dramatic political change happened. From a bipolar system, preached by the West European scholars as the most stable in the whole Eastern Europe, Bulgaria faced the flood of populism manifested trough different political discourses on three separate occasions. In the following text we shall see the chronology of the political change in Bulgaria, thus see the exact positioning of “Ataka”.

## I STAGE 1990-2001 – Bipolar ideological clash

As said before, the first part of Bulgarian transition was characterised by the two dominant political principles which influenced the formation of the political scene. The first principle is based on the cleavage **communism versus anti-communism** which caused the formation of two opposing blocs represented by the BSP and the UDF. The clash resulted in distraction from the most important topics in the lives of the citizens like the economic situation in the country towards the themes like the role of the communists in the previous period and their processing. The second principle was the ethnic one. It resulted in the formation of the MRF which was a collateral product of the ethnic clash from 1980s, when the regime conducted the assimilation policy towards the Bulgarian Turks.

The consequence of the two cleavages resulted in creation of the practically bipolar political party system with the existence of a relatively small but influential minority party. Although some other parties managed to breach the threshold necessary to enter the national parliament, they remained insignificant in the dominant struggle between the two political blocs.

The initial stage of the collapse of the first party system started in 1996-1997 during the citizens’ protests. Issues like the improvement of the economic performance and the need for reforms stopped the struggle, and gave the UDF a mandate to carry on the necessary transformation of the country. The surpassing of the public attention to the other matters, made the first principle, communism versus anti-communism, insignificant.

But the second, ethnic principle, remained important, thus further influenced the Bulgarian political scene causing the emergence of the new parties. The political remnants of the first stage are the BSP, the MRF and the historic right parties the UDF and the DSB

## II STAGE 2001-2005- Emergence of political centre

The second stage was characterized by the emergence of the new political stream which represented the political centre personalized in the former tsar Simeon Saksoburgotski. It marked the end of the polarization of the Bulgarian political system, and thus introduced still ongoing process of its fragmentation. As said before, the appearance of Simeon on the political scene marked the upraise of populism, but also it has introduced the political discourse which denied previous polarization between the former communists and the anti-communists. It has also challenged the established pattern of political representation, with questioning of the importance of political parties. His own political party, the NMSS was named *movement*, probably to underline the difference between his political option and all the others.

The result of the NMSS’s victory was the marginalization of the UDF, which later faced internal splits. The mayor of Sofia, Stefan Sofianski and the former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov pulled their fractions out and founded new parties. This left the UDF without a chance to represent a challenge to the ruling majority. The BSP strengthened since the previous elections, slowly becoming the major opposition party. The trend of growth of the BSP’s popularity was continued with the victory of its candidate, Georgi Parvanov, at the presidential elections. Other characteristic of this period was re-entering of the MRF to the government, causing the future cleavage on the ethnic basis.

Simeon’s political movement was to an extent ideologically colourless. Initially the NMSS opted for the political position of the historic right parties, but soon it chose the liberal stream, hence entered the Liberal International. But, this ideological orientation does not restrain the NMSS from being a party tightly connected to the personality of Simeon Saksoburgotski. The political centre proved to be weak on the longer run, with diminishing popularity of its leader.

## III THIRD STAGE 2005-onwards– Emergence of political extremism

As said before, the emergence of the NMSS broke the ties of the bipolar political system and opened the path for the other political discourses. The extreme right ideology, marginalized after the democratic changes and the failure of the “Revival process”, got the chance for the new upstart. The absence of the strong right party, caused by the fragmentation of the UDF, allowed the radical groups to come to the surface and challenge the moderate right discourse. The political party “Ataka” although populist, differs in ideology and methods from the “soft” populism of Simeon Saksoburgotski. Methods of political struggle employed by “Ataka” were peculiar yet unseen on the modern political scene of Bulgaria – scandals, violent rhetoric, and disrespect for the institutions of the system. Indeed, “Ataka” challenged all other political parties on the scene, negating their purpose of existence.

The emergence of “Ataka” proved that the revival of the historic right parties to former heights is not possible, the right oriented voters are rather searching for an alternative than reconsidering voting for the old parties. But, after the first shock and the temporary “Le Penn” effect, it was clear that the extreme populism of “Ataka” is not the political option which could occupy the empty spot of the political right.

## IV STAGE 2006-onwards – Diversification of populism

With the registration of the CEDB as a political party, Bulgarian scene experienced the third wave of populism. The discourse presented by its informal leader and the current mayor of Sofia, Boyko Borisov is in a mid-way between the “soft” populism of



Simeon Saksoburgotski and the “extreme” populism of “Ataka”. The CEDB presented itself as a pro-Western and pro-European party which is opting for the liberal economic course. Like “Ataka” and the NMSS, the CEDB is also a product of media exposure of its leader. Due to his employment as the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Simeon’s government, Borisov used this position to promote himself as a fierce fighter against criminal and corruption in the country. His actions caused the imminent rise of popularity which was crowned with his election as a “tsarist” candidate for the mayor of the capital. From then onwards, Borisov became the most popular politician in the country. The combination of the pro-European political platform and the media presentation as a “strong man” (media is often comparing the presentation of Borisov as *Batman* – vigilante who cares for all the oppressed by the criminal on the streets). The success of this patchwork was proved at the European elections and Municipal elections in 2007 when the CEDB proved to be the most popular party on the Bulgarian political scene. Yet, it has to be seen whether this party can take the position of the historic right parties, thus prove to be much more than “one day” phenomenon.

The rise of populism as a dominant political method of behaviour on the right part of the Bulgarian political scene proved that the Bulgarian society lacks a consistent political alternative which could fulfil the reservoir of optimism and belief to the institutions of the system. General dissatisfaction with the political parties opened a way for “strong” political personalities who are emphasizing the “scapegoat” strategy in order to explain the failures of past and present political elites. Yet, it seems that the populists are able to keep their popularity as long as they are in the opposition. Simeon’s four years in power caused radical fall of his popularity, probably never to return, because he failed to fulfil his unrealistic promises. “Ataka”, with avoidance of the dominant political stream, managed, until now, to keep its popularity from the first day, but the same avoidance made it unable to attract new voters. The popularity of the CEDB and Boiko Borisov is still growing, because this party is still not a parliamentary one. The conclusion that follows is that the Bulgarian system is in the segment that Ernesto Laclau called *the less structured political system, which is being challenged by the populists who are acting both as “insiders” and “outsiders”* (Simeon and Borisov). On the other hand, the appearance of the populist discourse represented by “Ataka”, which would be marginalized due to its extremist positions if the system is *largely self structured*. But the appearance of the first wave of populism and its continuation through the third wave represented by Borisov, are keeping the system in the position of *less structured*, thus allowing the continued existence and institutionalization of the second, extremist wave.

### 3.6.2 - Bipolar relations of Ataka with the other Bulgarian parties

#### Governing parties

As Anton Sirakov pointed out in the interview, “Ataka” considers the politics of all governments since 1997 as directed against the interest of Bulgarian people. Mr Sirakov named it in a colourful way, *the politics of the three SS<sup>72</sup> government*, referring to the initials of the three Prime Ministers of Bulgaria which were the conductors of the anti-Bulgarian politics: Stefan Sofianski (the prime minister of transition government led by the UDF in the beginning of 1997), Simeon Saksoburgotski and Sergey Stanishev.

#### “Ataka” and the MRF

The most important aspect of “Ataka”’s rhetoric is its opposing to the existence of the MRF and a way of functioning of the Bulgarian ethnic model. “Ataka” presents itself as the complete antipode to the MRF, a party which defends the interest of a common Bulgarian from one anti-Constitutional and anti-state party. The goal is to cease the MRF’s existence or at least to prevent their participation in the Government.



Siderov on the protest in front of the Sofia’s mosque

From the first session of the new parliament in October 2005, the representatives of „Ataka” began with harsh critiques of the MRF and its role in the new Stanishev’s Government, dubbing it as the “Tripartite coalition” led by three non-Bulgarians.

72 Shutzstaffel - he made a word game since the initials of the three Bulgarian prime ministers are starting with letter S, which makes the abbreviation which resembles the infamous Nazi squads



The anti-MRF discourse is presented in a chronological manner – the MRF owes its existence to the interests of the corrupted Bulgarian political elite from the beginning of transition. The BSP allowed the anti-constitutional formation of the MRF, to prevent its unification with the UDF in 1991. It continued with the cooperation of almost all other political parties with the MRF, in different time points, for various reasons. The first government of the UDF, led by Filip Dimitrov used it, as well as the BSP and the NMSS on two occasions. As Anton Sirakov said, the MRF’s influence on the domestic political scene is also caused by the international factors, before all the USA and Turkey, whose aim is to weaken Bulgaria.

It is interesting to point out that these two parties are getting more votes as their rhetoric over time becomes sharper towards each other. The biggest electoral breakthrough of the MRF in last ten years happened at the moment when “Ataka” appeared on the political scene of Bulgaria. It seems that the nationalist rhetoric of “Ataka” raises the feelings of insecurity among the ethnic Turks. Turks on their behalf become more dependent on Ahmed Dogan as a protector of their status. Moreover, the uprising of “Ataka” has much to do with the behaviour of the MRF in the Bulgarian politics and its monopolizing of certain political institutions in order to keep their influence over the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

On the other hand, “Ataka” is, in the sense, the mirror image of the MRF. Although their rhetorically strongest remark of the MRF is its ethnic origin, “Ataka” is the very same kind of a party. It is almost exclusively ethnic Bulgarian party, regarding their programme documents and their behaviour on the domestic and international political scene. In words “Ataka” is for the Bulgarian ethnic model, but on the other hand, this party denies the basic presumptions of rights for the national minorities.

It cannot be foreseen that “Ataka” would ever accept the MRF as a political partner because of the mentioned reasons. The identity of “Ataka” relies on the critique of existence of the MRF, thus it cannot be expected that this party would fore fit its rhetoric and, as Mr Sirakov pointed out, legitimize the existence of this party.

### “Ataka” and the NMSS

The identity of “Ataka” was shaped at the time when Simeon Saksoburgotski was a prime minister of Bulgaria; hence it was very much connected to the critique of the NMSS regime. Firstly, the crucial remark to Simeon and his party is their coalition with the MRF – Simeon allowed the MRF to enter the government for the first time in seven years.

The rest of “Ataka”’s critical approach towards the NMSS is based on the results of Simeon’s Government but also Simeon’s political personality. “Ataka” believes that during his reign as a Prime Minister, Simeon did not do anything in the real interest of Bulgaria and its people, but just for himself. He just pushed the Law on return of the nationalised Royal property through the parliament. Mr Sirakov questioned the patriotism of Simeon and his right to be involved in the Bulgarian politics, referring

to his life out of Bulgaria for more than 50 years. He questioned the patriotic feelings due to the fact that Simeon is hiding the citizenship that he owned during his exile. Moreover, Sirakov referred that the real test of the Simeon’s patriotism is in the relation of his kids towards Bulgaria, since none of them took the Bulgarian citizenship nor are they living in Bulgaria.

On the other hand, there is a series of compromises that the NMSS’s government accepted in order to push Bulgaria close to the EU and NATO. The most important is probably the closure of the four blocs of the Koslodui Nuclear Power Plant, for which there is no real justification. The other object of critique is the move of Simeon’s government to send Bulgarian soldiers to Iraq in order to fulfil obligations for the accession to the NATO. Still, the critique of “Ataka” is slowly diminishing, due to the fall of the popularity of Simeon and his party.

As for the political profile of the NMSS, the liberal platform of this party is the opposite of the “Ataka”’s nationalistic platform, thus also unacceptable as a possible partner.

### “Ataka” and the BSP



Sergey Stanishev, current Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

Like the other two governing parties, the BSP and its leaders Sergey Stanishev and Georgi Parvanov represent symbols of national treason. But critique of the BSP mostly relies on its political profiles and deeds of the representatives of this party while they were in opposition. Regarding the political profile of the BSP, “Ataka” blames them for abandoning the basic socialist principles thus leaving the Bulgarian people in the claws of international and domestic “criminals”. The BSP just continued the liberal politics of the previous two governments, far away from the leftist goals. “Ataka” is referring to their pre-election promises regarding the reform of the pension and health

funds, for which they did not do anything, but completely the opposite. As Mr Sirakov said, the BSP is reinforcing the private health insurance and private hospitals which the majority of Bulgarian population cannot afford. The main reason for this critique is the insisting of “Ataka” on the welfare functions of the state, thus underlining the difference between the “self-proclaimed” socialists and them.

“Ataka” also criticizes the BSP for its foreign politics, regarding its previous anti-NATO statements and actions.

## Opposition parties

From the beginning of its parliamentary activity, “Ataka” proclaimed that its entrance to the National Parliament marked the historic change of the Bulgarian politics. They referred to it as the end of the existence of the false opposition in the parliament, which actually supports the ruling manner of the parties in power. With this proclamation, “Ataka” marked a clear distinction between them and all other forces in the parliament. As it was mentioned before, they established a clear parallel between the government of the UDF and the next two, which are the major object of their critique. Thus the UDF and the DSB as successor parties of the governing UDF in the period 1997-2001 are also the main objects of the “Ataka”’s critique.

## “Ataka” and the DSB and UDF

Although there are some common political standpoints like the critique of the role of the MRF in the Bulgarian politics, there is no real cooperation between the DSB, the party of the former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov and “Ataka”. As mentioned before, “Ataka” is extremely harsh on the critique of Kostov’s role as the Prime Minister and the political course that Bulgaria had taken at that time. Ivan Kostov and his government started the “unjust” and “corrupted” process of privatization of the Bulgarian economy with the direct consequence in the impoverishment of the Bulgarian people. Also, that government gave the initial push to the present Bulgarian foreign politics - the direction towards the accession to the EU and NATO.

In the Parliament, there was not any open cooperation between these two parties. As Sirakov pointed out, Kostov and his party are declaring themselves right wing oriented. Yet, they did not want to support Volen Siderov in the second turn of Presidential elections in 2006. Similarly, Kostov in his statements denounced any possible cooperation with “Ataka” in the future since they are one national-xenophobic party<sup>73</sup>.

The relation of “Ataka” towards the UDF was almost the same, although in the latest period it can be considered as quite relaxed. In the beginning, the UDF was also refusing official cooperation with “Ataka”. However, all three parties were

73 Росица Талева, Костов: Не можем да залагваме, че сме обединена опозиция, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2008, web site -News .bg [http://news.ibox.bg/news/id\\_1122114912](http://news.ibox.bg/news/id_1122114912)

voting together against the government’s proposals. Both “Ataka” and the UDF were supporting every DSB’s appeal for voting non-confidence to the present government. In the beginning of 2008, “Ataka” and the UDF, supported by the party “Order, lawfulness, justice” formed a formation called “United opposition” and proclaimed that their aim is to “stop the corruption” of the current government. It can be seen as one of the first attempts of “Ataka” to legitimize itself through the cooperation with one historic right party. But it is hard to believe that either one of the current opposition parties would accept “Ataka” for its partner, keeping in mind that their partners on



Siderov and Stoyanov on the rally of Ataka

the European level are opposing the cooperation with “Ataka” – which was seen in the second round of the presidential elections.

## “Ataka” and the CEDB

Probably for the future period of Bulgarian politics, the most interesting would be the relationship between the CEDB and “Ataka”. The CEDB is still the non-parliamentary party, because it was founded at the end of 2006, between the two elections terms. But, at the last European elections this party received most of the votes on the national level, due to the popularity of its unofficial leader and the notorious mayor of Sofia, Boyko Borisov. The CEDB is seen as the real replacement for the historic right parties and the NMSS. This party represents the third wave of populism in Bulgaria since 2001, thus it has a quite similar political methodology as “Ataka”. The rhetoric is not as sharp, nationalist and xenophobic. Moreover, the CEDB is strongly supporting the European integrations in the current manner. The real parallel between “Ataka” comes with the anti-corruption and the anti-criminal platform, on which the popularity of Boyko Borisov was built.

From the moment when Boyko Borisov separated himself from the NMSS and former tsar, media were speculating about the possible cooperation. Nevertheless, an open coalition did not happen yet. In fact, during the campaign for the municipal elections the main target of “Ataka”’s campaign was Boyko Borisov’s manner of rule in Sofia. Still, none of the leaders officially denounced the possibility of post-electoral



cooperation. Anton Sirakov said that there are no real obstacles for the possible cooperation except the liberal economic platform pursued by the CEDB, comprising the complete privatization of Bulgarian economy.

In the previous period on the Bulgarian political scene “Ataka” found itself lonely and trapped in the cage of its own rhetoric and political platform. As much as the radical anti-system rhetoric and nationalist platform helped “Ataka” in distinguishing itself from the other political options, it caused the undesirability of “Ataka” as a potential political partner. Openly expressed nationalism and anti-Europeanism (at least in the mainstream sense) caused pressures from the outside on the opposition parties to be much more careful in allying with “Ataka”. Thus present cases of cooperation, in and out of the parliament, should be considered as merely technical ones. On the other hand, as Vladimir Shopov outlined, “Ataka” is seeking the internal legitimization through cooperation with other mainstream right parties.

### 3.7 - International cooperation of “Ataka”

The first image one can see while opening the official web site of the political party “Ataka” is the photo of Jean Marie Le Penn, the leader of the French National Front, reading the daily newspaper Ataka. A little bit lower is the picture of the leaders of both parties, “Ataka” and Front National, Siderov and Le Penn, with joint raised hands. As mentioned before, the debate, which is currently present among the scientific circles in Bulgaria, is about the ideological positioning of “Ataka”. Some scholars are promoting the idea that “Ataka” is in fact a far left party, because of the parts of its programme which can be considered as leftist: re-nationalisation of the privatized companies and the promotion of the state system of social security similar to the former communist one. Others are putting “Ataka” within the extreme right discourse, mainly because of their extreme nationalist and chauvinist statements. This chapter will present a short overview of the cooperation between “Ataka” and its West European partner parties, thus giving us more information about the self-identification of “Ataka” established by the choice of its partners on the international level.

Almost from the moment of its founding, representatives of “Ataka” were trying to establish cooperation on the European level with the parties of similar ideological profile. In October 2005, for the first time the South-East European nationalist parties were invited to the annual meeting of the European far right parties. At the meeting, except representatives of “Ataka” and Greater Romania, the delegates from well-known European far right parties were present: the National Front from France, Freedom Party of Austria, Flemish Interest from Belgium, Social Alternative and Tricolor Flame from

Italy and Greater Romania. The purpose of the meeting was the future cooperation in the European Parliament, with possible formation of the parliamentary group of the far right parties. Not by chance, Romania and Bulgaria were invited at the time. According to the rule 29 of the EP’s Rules of Procedure, the group in the EP can be formed only if it is composed of the MEPs of the similar ideological profile from at least one-fifth of the EU member states, thus the minimal number of MEPs in the group is twenty. Therefore, with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, it was possible to create such a group and breach the threshold of twenty MEPs.

The first signs that the cooperation between “Ataka” and European extreme right parties is established came in November that year. Three MEPs led by Bruno Gollnisch (the deputy president of the National Front) issued a declaration “**against unequal treatment of some political parties in Bulgaria**”. Without mentioning “Ataka”, it was outlined, in the declaration, that in the Bulgarian National Parliament the leader of one political party was restricted from the right to address the parliament on various issues, and moreover that his group has no right to choose the name under which it would be represented. The initiative faced fiasco, since only 10 MEPs had supported it in the period of three months<sup>74</sup>.

The first sign of the formal cooperation came in June 2006, when Volen Siderov visited Jean Marie Le Penn during his campaign at the French presidential elections. During this visit the future cooperation on the European level was discussed, as well as the support the National Front gave to “Ataka” “since this party is under the unjust attacks from the other parties and state media”<sup>75</sup>.

After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, „Ataka” and Greater Romania entered the EP and offered a new perspective to the fragile European extreme right. They have got a chance to form their own parliamentary group thus to have a stronger influence on the EU’s policy shaping. The formation itself was marked by a new scandal of Dimitar Stoyanov who again expressed his disagreement with the Jewish control of European politics towards Bulgaria and support to the Roma, criminal minority “who are forcing their children to prostitute”<sup>76</sup>. This scandal almost prevented the formation of the new political group in the EP. Anyhow the initiative for the group formation was signed on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2007 and approved six days later when the group *Identity, Sovereignty, Tradition* was officially formed. The group consisted of seven MEPs from the National Front, five MEPs from the Greater Romania and one independent Romanian MEP, three MEPs of the Flemish Interest, three MEPs of “Ataka” (actually in the beginning just one – Dimitar Stoyanov, but after the European elections the group was extended), one MEP from Italian parties Social Alternative and Tricolour flame, one MEP from the Freedom Party of Austria and one independent MEP from the United Kingdom. The president of the group became Bruno Gollnisch, as the

74 Светислав Терзиев, “Европейското Фиаско на Атака”, in Sega, Sofia, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2006, <http://www.segabg.com/online/article.asp?issueid=2159&sectionid=5&id=0001102> [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

75 Волен Сидеров се срещна са Жан Мари Лю Пен, 18th July, 2006, web site of “Ataka” [http://www.”Ataka”.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=98&Itemid=78](http://www.”Ataka”.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=98&Itemid=78), [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

76 Ирина Новакова, “Десен, крайно десен -Димитър Стоянов”, in Капитал, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2007, p. 16



representative of the biggest and most influential European far right party. Group's formation caused a quick reaction from almost all other parliamentary groups. The representatives of socialists, liberals and greens even raised a question of formation of "sanitary cordon" to prevent members of the newly established group to claim some of the official posts in the committees of the EP<sup>77</sup>.

The programme of the group was based on the minimal compromise that they could reach:

1. for introducing legal constraints to lower the immigration from third countries against the Constitution of the EU and any initiative for the creation of the European super state
2. against the accession of Turkey to the EU, thus protection of the Christian roots of the EU
3. protection of the national sovereignty of each member state

The group was formed due to the fact that independent MEPs have fewer rights than inside the group, like the chairman posts in the various committees and the right of legislative initiative. But the group was functioning more or less in a bad way. The group's dissolution came quickly – in November 2007 the Greater Romania of Vadim Tudor withdrew its members from the group. The reason for this act was the statement of Alessandra Mussolini (leader of the Social Alliance and its MEP) who said that Romanians "are habitual law breakers and the Romanian ambassador to Italy should be expelled"<sup>78</sup>. Now the group had only 18 MEPs left, a number which is not sufficient for the continuation of the groups' existence. Although there were voices that the group would manage to find two more independent MEPs, which would allow the continuation of the group's existence, until this date it did not happen. All the MEPs of the European far right parties are now non-attached MEPs. The dissolution of the group was welcomed by some of the EP parliamentary groups.

Nevertheless the cooperation continued outside the EP. In January 2008 the leaders of the National Front, Freedom Party of Austria, Flemish Interest and "Ataka" had a meeting in Vienna where they discussed the possibility of formation of a new party on the European level. The idea was to summon all the far right nationalist parties from the EU member states, but also from the possible candidate countries like Albania and Ukraine<sup>79</sup>. As Le Penn outlined "there is nothing strange in the attempts to form one European patriotic party, since there are parties from the European countries

77 Ирина Новакова, *opt.cit.*, p. 17

78 Far Right group in the European Parliament collapses, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 <http://www.eupolitix.com/latestnews/news-article/newsarticle/far-right-group-in-eu-parliament-collapses/> [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

79 Европейска Патриотична Партия се роди във Виена, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, web site of "Ataka" [http://www."Ataka".bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=176&Itemid=78](http://www.)

which have common views about certain problems"<sup>80</sup>. The future party was dubbed "European Patriotic Party" or "European Freedom Party" and it was formed "to be a counterbalance to other political forces in Europe"<sup>81</sup>. The leaders who were present at the meeting said that the new party would fight against the islamization of Europe, immigration and globalization, and that it would be based on the Christian traditions of all European countries, including the non-EU members, like Serbia and Russia. Hence, the leaders expressed their opinion that Turkey should never become a member of the EU as well as the possibly independent Kosovo<sup>82</sup>.

But, in the interview the vice president of "Ataka" Anton Sirakov said that all talks on the formation of supra national far right party are stopped because nationalist parties cannot be summoned in one international. The problem is that with creation of such an organization, national parties would lose parts of their independence which are in collision with their goals at the national level.

The international cooperation is the final proof regarding the self identification of "Ataka" – without a doubt the choice of "Ataka" were West European far right parties. Indeed, this cooperation is rather fragile and declarative because of reluctance for one stronger official party federation. Moreover, except marking some general similarities like the anti-system platform or openly expressed anti-immigration politics, in most of the cases it is not possible to find a single issue (except probably previously outlined platform for the cooperation in the EP) on which all the partners would undoubtedly agree. This leaves all the parties somewhere in between – it is not possible any more to protect national sovereignty, even in the manner of Charles de Gaulle, without acting on the supranational level of the EU. On the other hand, parties and their leaders (in most of the cases) are not ready to accept the joint authority for the more efficient cooperation.

### 3.7.1 - Profiles of the West European partners of „Ataka“

#### National Front-France

The National Front is considered as a forefather of all West European far right

80 Nationalist Leaders to form New European 'Patriotic' Party by November, 25<sup>th</sup> January ,2008, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1201274222.43/> [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

81 EU Far Right Groups to Form a Party, 26<sup>th</sup> January ,2008, [http://agonist.org/20080126/eu\\_far\\_right\\_groups\\_to\\_form\\_party/](http://agonist.org/20080126/eu_far_right_groups_to_form_party/) [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

82 The Launch of a United European Patriotic Party based on Christian Tradition to Fight Islamization [http://www.realclearreligion.com/index\\_files/afb8bdc38879a5670d89f2415a20dc72-303.html](http://www.realclearreligion.com/index_files/afb8bdc38879a5670d89f2415a20dc72-303.html) [Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008]

parties of the new type. It rose from the movement called the *New Order* 1972<sup>83</sup>, as a political formation which would compete on the national elections. For the first and only president, to this date, Jean Marie Le Penn was elected. The party did not have any significant success at the elections from its founding to the European elections in 1984. The political platform presented by the National Front was quite different to the other parties:

1. it was the first party that emphasized the issue of the immigration with all the effects that it causes (delinquency, increasing costs in welfare assistance, unemployment)
2. insecurity – a demand for more “law and order” in connection with the previous issue and weakening of traditional bonds
3. mistrust towards party politics and democratic institutions
4. general dissatisfaction with the international position of France<sup>84</sup> - losing of the national sovereignty on the expense of the EU.

The new issues which the National Front brought out became popular at the moment of dissatisfaction with the politics of the left and growing crisis in the EU. Its result on the European elections in 1984 (11.08%) was successfully transcended on the national level. In the following fifteen year long period, on all the elections the party of Le Penn gained from 9 to even 15 % of the national support<sup>85</sup>. Still, the success of the party was much more visible on the regional level, since none of the mainstream parties were willing to form any kind of coalition.

Separately from the success of the party, in the media the actions of its leader Jean Marie Le Penn were much more emphasized. As uncontested leader of the French far right, Le Penn ran on few occasions for the post of the President of France. Although significant in percentage of gained votes, Le Penn’s campaign always remained on the border of the mainstream politics. But, at the 2002 Presidential elections, the candidate of the left and the preferred opponent in the second round with the acting president Jacques Chirac, got less votes from Le Penn. He founded himself in a second round and in the middle of hysteric campaign against him on both French and European level. Le Penn did not manage to win. Nevertheless, it helped the National Front and its leader to come into the focus of the media, and become a symbol for the other far right parties in Europe.

Le Penn was also active on the international scale – he was one of the first nationalist leaders who looked towards the new democratic states in Eastern Europe. In the second half of 1990s he established close contacts with the Croatian Democratic

83 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit., p. 74

84 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit., p. 75

85 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit., p. 94

Community and the Serbian Radical Party.

## Freedom Party of Austria

The Freedom Party was founded in 1949, on the remains of the National-Socialist party, but it had also incorporated some other elements, which were differing from it. During the years it was slowly changing its profile, by removing the Nazi elements from the party ideology. Still, its nationalistic profile remained pan-Germanistic, despite the fact that FPA became the member of the Liberal International. Its ideology in the first thirty years of existence could be described as a mixture of anti-clericalism, liberalism, conservatism and pan-Germanism.<sup>86</sup>

The FPA was also one of the minor parties in the Austrian Parliament – from 1950s to the late 1980s it scored around 5-7% on the national, regional and municipal elections. In one short episode, the FPA became a part of the mainstream politics, due to the fact that it supported Socialists to create a coalition government in 1983. The coalition with socialists caused a sort of a mutiny and the bringing of young Jörg Heider to the presidential post of the party. Heider was one of the prominent young leaders who managed to succeed on the periphery thus obtrude himself to the party central.

With charismatic Heider as a leader, the party went to its biggest success in its history. On the parliamentary elections in 1990 the FPA got 16%. Soon, it came to a split - something that could be called liberal wing of the FPA left the group, thus caused the changing of the course of party politics. Now, under Heider’s leadership party reorientated in a direction similar to the direction of the National Front in France. Instead highlighting issues from the past, related to the Third Reich, Heider’s FPA turned its attention to the following issues:

- the immigrants and connected problems – gaining of the Austrian citizenship, welfare rights etc.
- against the accession to the EU thus losing sovereignty and neutral position of Austria
- denouncing the pan-Germanism and introducing the Austrian nationalism
- against globalization and multiculturalism<sup>87</sup>

In 1999 party managed to get around 27% of votes which was their biggest success ever, what allowed them to join their forces with conservatives of Wolfgang Shiesel to form a new government. Although the party became a minor partner in the government, Governments of all the other member states in the EU decided to manifestly show their

86 Piero Ignazi, opt.cit., p. 88

87 P.Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 94

disagreement with the composition of the Austrian government – this was the first case that one extreme right party became part of a ruling coalition in one West European country after the World War II. Soon the protest measures of the EU were stopped, but it caused Heider choosing to stay on the function of the Governor of Karinthia, which he still occupies today. At the next elections the FPA suffered great electoral defeat – the party got 17% less than on the last elections. In 2005, due to the clash between factions in the party, Heider and few other influential members of the leadership of the party decided to separate. The result was founding of a new party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria. The result is that both parties at the last elections got together the same number of votes as the former FPA, thus barely passing the threshold to enter the national parliament.

### Flemish interest (former Flemish Bloc) - Belgium

The Flemish Interest was founded in 1978 as one of the parties which were opting for the separation of Flanders from Belgium. After poor electoral results during 1970s, the party adopted the anti-immigrant image, mostly towards the immigrants from the third-world<sup>88</sup>. Unlike the other far right parties whose anti-immigrant rhetoric was based primarily on the economic issues and “law and order”, Flemish Interest developed racist anti-immigrant platform, proclaiming the intention “to maintain biological substance”<sup>89</sup>. On the other hand, Flemish Interest has more dispersed programme issues than any other far right party:

- protection of traditional values against sexual liberation and feminism
- strengthening of law and order, introduction of a death penalty
- Europe of people and nationalities
- amnesty and full rehabilitation for the World War II collaborators
- supports free market economy and neo-liberal positions
- anti-political (against political mafia in and anti establishment (against all other parties who are collaborating with the Valonian parties))<sup>90</sup>

In 1991, the first breakthrough to the national level happened when the Flemish Interest got 6.6% on the state level (their electoral base is exclusively in Flanders). Since than at each election, s party was slowly increasing the number of votes. At the

88 P.Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 103

89 P.Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 103

90 P.Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 104

last parliamentary elections they got around 11%. Nevertheless, all other parties on the Flemish scene decided not to form a coalition with the Flemish Interest on any level. Hence the party remains in a deep opposition.

### Tricolour flame - Italy

The Tricolour Flame is one of the new ideological successor parties of the Italian Fascist Party. It was founded in 1995. The main part of their programme is re-evaluation of the Mussolini’s goal to create a Social Republic of Italy<sup>91</sup>. Their goals are the following:

- creation of a true welfare state, thus opposing neo-liberal capitalist trends
- questioning of the system in which representative democracy works
- protection of the national, social and cultural identity and the Italian tradition
- protection of family values
- strong and unified Europe, but as a Europe of peoples instead of Europe of supranational economic interest
- security issues - against prostitution and drugs distribution<sup>92</sup>

The Tricolour Flame never achieved the significant increase in its popularity. It stands in between of 1-2%. Yet it managed to elect one MEP on the European elections in 2004.

### Social Alternative - Italy

The Social Alternative is a coalition of far right parties led by Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of Benito Mussolini and the leader of the small neo-fascist party called the Social Action. The coalition was formed before the European elections 2004 and it consisted of the Social Action, New Force and National Social Front. The coalition managed to get 1.2% and one MEP. The programme of the coalition could be summarised to following points:

1. re-enforcing the solutions similar to the Fascist Social Republic

91 P.Ignazi, opt.cit, p. 34

92 Programme of the Tricolour Flame, official web site <http://www.fiammatricolore.net/pdf/programma.pdf> [Retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008]



2. protection of the family and traditional values
3. new, more strict regulations on immigration
4. Europe of peoples
5. defence of workers <sup>93</sup>

The coalition expressed some of programmatic disagreements, due to the moderate approach of Alessandra Mussolini to the questions like the right to abortion or sexual freedoms. Nevertheless, the coalition fell apart after the Parliamentary elections in 2006, when it got less than 1%.

As we could see, the parties counted in the new wave of European far right are of quite different origin and historical legacy. They are also expressing the different programmatic issues as important for the nation. For example, while the Flemish Interest is explicitly neo-liberal party in economic issues, two Italian parties are showing much reluctance to this concept, outlining it as a danger to the future of Italian workers. Still, they are put in the “same basket”, which proves that the basic traditional cleavage - the ownership over the means of production is not a predominant one in the identification of one party as left or right, or extreme left and extreme right.



Volen Siderov

In comparison to its international partners “Ataka” is certainly not significantly different. As we could see, all of the extreme right parties in Western Europe have different backgrounds: Freedom Party of Austria is historically connected with the remains of Nazism in that country and with anti-clerical and liberal proponents of the pan-Germanism; French National Front has its roots in few extreme parties founded after the World War II, but it is also connected with the anti-immigrant factions from the late 1960s; Flemish Bloc, on its behalf, is a successor of the World War II

<sup>93</sup> Aleanza Sociale, Decalogo dei valori, [http://www.azionesociale.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2](http://www.azionesociale.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2) [Retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008]

collaborator parties from Belgium; and the two partners from Italy are the successors of the inheritance of fascism in that country. More or less, all of them have their roots from the time after the World War II and the change of the economies of these countries that followed. With “Ataka” the situation is different. Its origins and reasons for existence date from the time after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the economic trauma that followed for the majority of population of Eastern Europe. And by it, the reasons for addressing these issues are different by its origin but have the same cause. For example, when preaching the state organised social security systems, “Ataka” is directly referring to the communist period and than present mechanisms of social security. Or, with expressing anti-Western standpoints (and particularly anti-USA and anti-NATO), “Ataka” is evoking the memories of the period when Bulgaria was a member of opposing bloc to the NATO. But, the final product is so similar that the cooperation was easy to establish. By this moment, the party which cooperated mostly with “Ataka” is the National Front. Its representatives as well as its leader visited “Ataka” during the local and European elections in 2007. It is not surprising, due to the fact that Le Penn was active in supporting far right parties before. With the other parties, except for the Greater Romania, the cooperation was merely technical, within the EP parliamentary group *Identity, Sovereignty, Tradition*.

With the establishment of the cooperation at the European level, “Ataka” is stressing its capability to find the suitable partners, who are able to accept its programmatic standpoints. Also, “Ataka” is sending the message about its self-identification, and the possible issues that could easily become the parts of its discourse – like the anti-immigrant politics or some specific issues regarding the functioning of the EU (the accession of Turkey).

### 3.8 - Media images – daily newspaper *Ataka*; magazine *Kapital*

In the following sub-chapter political discourses of the two paper media – the daily newspaper *Ataka* and the pro-liberal weekly political-economic magazine *Kapital* will be analysed and compared. These two paper media are in a sense completely opposite – the first one represents the self image of “Ataka”, while the latter is highly critical towards all of the phenomena in the contemporary Bulgarian society.

The daily newspaper *Ataka* was founded after the party “Ataka” became parliamentary – in October, 2005. It appeared as the paper media owned by the party, and it is used for day to day transmittance of statements of party’s officials and the politics of the party. Since its founding in 2005 until May, 2008 it has reached almost

eight hundred issues. Usually it consisted of thirteen usual columns scheduled in the following order: *Front page-main topic, In Bulgaria, In the world, Theme, Comments, Economy, New World Order, Interview, The voice of the people, Reading and Hobby*. For our purpose the most important are first four columns and the section economy.

*Kapital* is one of the most popular political and economic magazines in Bulgaria, and it has been published in Bulgaria since 1992. It consists of the following sections with regular columns: *Comments and analysis, Theme of the issue, Politics and Economy, World, Community, Media and commercial, Sport, Companies, Real estate, Finances and My capital*. Due to the fact that *Kapital* covers much wider scope of topics than *Ataka*, from this magazine those columns which correspond thematically to the ones covered by the newspaper *Ataka* will be used.

The period covered by the analysis dates from the October, 2005 to the November, 2007. The analysis is based on the presentation comparison of the sample of the media images produced in writings of these two paper media during three different intervals:

1. The first interval is the month of October, 2006 when the election campaign for the upcoming presidential elections was in focus, as the first election period during which *Ataka* newspaper was published. In this interval 30 articles from the magazine *Kapital* were subjected to the inquiry from the four consecutive issues, as well as the 64 articles from the 24 issues of the newspaper *Ataka*.

2. The second interval is the end of December, 2006 and beginning of January, 2007 - the last days prior to the accession of Bulgaria to the EU and two weeks after it. In this interval 29 articles from the magazine *Kapital* were subjected to the inquiry of the four consecutive issues, as well as the 59 articles from the 20 issues of the newspaper *Ataka*.

3. The third interval is the month of the municipal elections in October 2007, which is the border period of this research. In this interval 39 articles from the magazine *Kapital* were subjected to the inquiry of the four consecutive issues, as well as 70 articles from 27 issues of the newspaper *Ataka*.

In these three intervals *Kapital* was published in 12 issues. Within it, the subjects of the analysis were in total 98 articles of different lengths. Among them were also 8 interviews conducted with various experts, professionals or politicians. The newspaper *Ataka* was in these three periods published in 70 issues, where 193 articles were the subject of analysis. Within it were 15 interviews conducted mainly with the leader of "Ataka", Volen Siderov, and other members of the party leadership.

The whole analysis is the result of the personal empirical research of the author of this thesis, who had an inquiry in the mentioned issues of these two paper media.

### 3.8.1 - First interval – October, 2006

In the first period the writings of *Ataka* were mainly concentrated on the presidential campaign of the leader of the political party "Ataka", Volen Siderov. From the issue No 304 from 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2006 the front page of the newspaper covered the daily activity of Siderov eighteen times. Usually, they transmitted his speeches from the rallies of "Ataka", where Siderov was mainly attacking the acting president of the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov, for different reasons: cooperation with the "Turkish party" (MRF), candidate of the USA etc. Second line of attack on Parvanov was in connection with his engagement in the communist intelligence service before the 1990s. The articles referred to Parvanov as *Goce*, which was his intelligence code name. Except for the main political issues, the articles were also dealing with insignificant topic in which Parvanov was involved. For example, one was titled "Goce paid 50 000 leva to the folk singer in Razgrad".

It is interesting to mention, that the discourses of Siderov's speeches were changing regarding the place where the rally was held. For example, the dominant topic of Siderov's attack in Blagoevgrad was the issue of the people who consider themselves as the ethnic Macedonian. In areas of Krdzali, Rodopi or South-eastern Bulgaria he was mainly using the anti-MRF rhetoric. The titles were quite colourful, such as "I (Siderov) will free Rodopi from Dogan" or "I will deprive the economic base of MRF".

Another topic which was employed was speculating that *Ataka* became a second political force in the country, after Siderov entered the second round (5 articles). The aim of the discourse was to present "Ataka" as the only alternative to the governing coalition.

Beside the topics directed against Parvanov, in the section *In Bulgaria*, were covered topics with the negative news about the Bulgarian Roma (4 articles). In the focus of the two issues were the "Gypsy mobsters" who were responsible for stealing the electric cables in different cities or how the Bulgarian Roma sell their children in the United Kingdom for 11 000 British pounds.





Georgi Parvanov, current President of the Republic of Bulgaria

In the articles about foreign politics the attention was mainly given to the critique of the USA foreign politics, especially regarding its military presence in Iraq (3 articles). The attention was also given to the scandals at the USA political scene, or the massacres caused by the influence of the sects (4 articles). The other topic was also the close accession of Bulgaria to the EU (4 articles), but mainly in the negative connotation like that the Bulgarian accession is in fact the “slap on the face of Bulgaria” or they were transmitting standpoints of the EU officials that Bulgaria is not yet ready for the EU. Negative news about the Turkey were transmitted 4 times, of which two were in connection with the recognition by the French parliament of the genocide against Armenians in 1915.

The weekly magazine *Kapital* in this period showed much wider scope of interest. Generally speaking, the magazine usually covers almost all the topics about the public life of the country and world, but with the specific focus on the political and economic issues. Unlike the newspaper *Ataka*, the *Kapital* was not absolutely focused on the upcoming presidential elections.

In all four issues of the magazine during the month of October, 2006, it gave much space to the activity of the presidential candidates, but it also remained focused on the other issues. In the number issued on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 *Kapital* was analysing the influence of the presidential campaign of Volen Siderov on the future popularity of “Ataka” using the so called SWOT method (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) – in an objective manner the characteristics of Siderov and his campaign were analysed. In this period, much more attention was given to the presidential candidates of the BSP and the joint candidate of the historic right parties the UDF and the DSB (supported also by Boiko Borisov), Nedelcho Beronov. In three issues of this magazine, in the month of October, it was possible to find texts about him, but merely discussing how his candidacy could possibly influence the recovery of the Bulgarian right.

In the last issue of the magazine in October, *Kapital* was analysing the hysteria which was produced in the majority of Bulgarian paper and electronic media because

of Volen Siderov’s entrance to the second round of presidential elections. *Kapital* also offered a brief prediction about the second round of the presidential elections, where they stated that probably all other important political parties would support Parvanov instead of Siderov.

Other topics were much more highlighted. In all four issues of the *Kapital* magazine during October the main topic was the close accession of Bulgaria to the EU. Much of attention was given to the election of the first Bulgarian Euro Commissar – Maglena Kuneva (3 articles) and the potential candidates for this post. The topics varied, some were focused on the effect of the EU accession on the prices in Bulgaria, and others analysed the possible future immigration to the country and the possible consequences and outcomes (4 articles).

In total, in this first interval 4 articles were devoted entirely to Siderov as a candidate for the president or to the consequences of his victory. Siderov was also mentioned in few other articles, which were not directly connected with his activity on the political scene. In commenting presidential elections, *Kapital* tried to offer a scope of different independent opinions by prominent Bulgarian scholars, journalists and researchers (Ivan Krastev, Rumjana Bachvarova etc.). The independent and critical standpoint of *Kapital* is best seen in the previously mentioned article called “Siderov-steria”, where *Kapital* criticized the negative chain reaction in the media of Bulgaria against Siderov, i.e. black-white pictures which were presented in the discourse of the official state and pro-Western media.

### 3.8.2 - Second interval – January, 2006-December, 2007

In the last days of the 2006 the newspaper *Ataka* was barely covering the news about the accession of the country to the EU and certain attention was given to it only in the cases when it could be presented in the negative light (6 articles) – mostly related to the domestic political scene. *Ataka* for example commented the way in which the national minister for the European integrations, Maglena Kuneva, was released from post in the National Parliament in order to become the first Bulgarian Euro-Commissar. The major story presented was that the act of accession itself was just an excuse for the ruling majority to hide their helplessness in solving domestic problems: like the problem with the electricity which would start with the closure of the “Koslodui” Nuclear Power Plant (5 articles) or the diminishing of the domestic textile and food industry. The aim of these articles was to present that Bulgaria had paid a heavy price for its membership in the EU. Moreover *Ataka* covered the story about the “general” dissatisfaction in the EU member states with the Euro - implying that the European



Monetary Union is just a tool to weaken national economies. And finally, in the last issue of the newspapers *Ataka* before the New Year, the leader of the party, Volen Siderov, expressed his standpoint that he is not against the accession of Bulgaria to the EU *per se*, but that he is unhappy with the fact that Bulgarian interests were not protected during the negotiations.

And of course, much of the attention was given to the formation of the new "nationalist" group in the "European Parliament" in which the participation of the MEP, Dimitar Stoyanov, was foreseen (3 articles).

On the other hand, the classical topics of *Ataka* were much more covered in this period like the "Gypsy criminality" (2 articles), the bad management of the country by the ruling coalition (6 articles), US and Israeli foreign politics (2 articles) etc.

The leading topic were the reports about the problem of Bulgarian nurses which were held captive in Libya waiting for the death sentence because of the supposed intentional vaccination of Libyan children with the serum contagious with AIDS virus (8 articles). Day by day, the newspaper was campaigning against the Libyan government, but also against the EU and the Bulgarian government who were not engaged enough to protect the interests of the government.

In the focus of the magazine *Kapital*, during the last weeks of 2006, were the articles about other topics and not those about the accession of Bulgaria to the EU, probably because the magazine, during the last half of the same year, gave much of the attention to it. During this period, like in the newspaper *Ataka*, in the focus was the renewed judgement of the Libyan court against Bulgarian medics (7 articles and one survey). They were recapitulating the history of their imprisonment and all the efforts made by the Bulgarian Government and the EU representatives for their release, as well as the current situation and perspectives for its change, due to the fact that Bulgaria is a new member of the EU. Second issue to which *Kapital* gave much attention was the problem of global warming. The magazine devoted two "Theme of the issue" to this topic, publishing texts and interviews with the experts in this area (3 articles). The magazine also gave the retrospective of the events that happened during the past year with proper comments.

The issue of the EU integration was mentioned in the first number of 2007, where journalists discussed prospective of Bulgaria to become equally important in shaping the EU's politics as the other member states of the same size. Particularly, the context was related to the perspectives of Bulgaria in the EU, and the predictions that this country could achieve, in perspective, similar success like Ireland did. In objective manner, *Kapital* analysed good and negative sides of functioning of Bulgarian economy and its structural advantages (2 articles). The accent was given to the shortage of the educated labour force and predictions about the future development of labour force market in Bulgaria (2 articles). One article published in the same issue of *Kapital* is particularly interesting. It commented the awarding the title of "archont" to Slavcho Binev by one of the bishops of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the future MEP of the political party "Ataka". *Kapital* offered wider insight to the topic, by connecting it to

the cases of corruption in the Roman Catholic and other churches.

### 3.8.3 - Third interval – October, 2007

In the third period the newspaper *Ataka* was mainly covering the pre-election campaigns of the candidates of "Ataka" for mayors and for the posts in municipal boards. In every issue of the newspaper the front page and the following two were usually reserved for the presentation of the candidates. Most of the attention was given to the candidate for the mayor of Sofia, Slavcho Binev (14 articles), and to the candidate for the mayor of Burgas, the owner of the SKAT television, Valentin Nikolov (6 articles).

In the beginning of October, articles were predominantly devoted to the visit of the leader of the French National Front, Jean Marie Le Penn, who came to Bulgaria to support the candidates of "Ataka" on the upcoming municipal elections (3 articles). In connection, "Ataka" was also covering stories about the cooperation of the National Front with "Ataka".

Most of the articles were covering the campaign of Slavcho Binev, and his statements: about the performance of Boiko Borisov on the post of mayor of Sofia in the previous two years of his government; the actual problems in Sofia like the garbage problem, new line of Sofia metro etc. Curiously, the newspaper was addressing Binev in most of the issues as the candidate of "Ataka" for the mayor of Sofia, but in the cases when he was mentioned in the context of the religious questions he was addressed with his title "archont" (2 articles).

Another highlighted topic was the question of voting of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, in the sense that the MRF is controlling the votes of Turkish minority, or even buying them, when it is not possible to force people to vote (3 articles). The other topic like the "Gypsy criminality" (3 articles) and the US foreign relations (5 articles) were also not forgotten. The newspaper *Ataka* was reporting about the beating of the son of the party's activist by the criminals of Roma origin, or informing about Slavi Binev's statement that the government cares more about the integration of the Roma than about the payments of the Bulgarian teachers. Regarding the US politics, the attention was given to the initiative in the US Congress to recognize the Turkish genocide against the Armenian population during the World War I (3 articles).

In this period the economic problems were particularly highlighted, with comments on the rising of prices of basic food products (bread and sunflower oil) in particular towns in Bulgaria, or about the probable heating and electricity problems in Bulgaria in the near future (5 articles).

The main topics covered by the magazine *Kapital* during the October 2007 were the protests of the school teachers (6 articles and two interviews) and the local elections. During the September 2007 school teachers’ started demanding the rising of salaries. *Kapital* used this opportunity to make a comprehensive analysis of the educational system in Bulgaria, investigating a whole range of aspects which caused the protests. In order to build a comprehensive picture the magazine employed experts from various institutions to express their opinion (government, World Bank) about the problems and the justification of the demands of the protesters. On the other hand, by random sample they have interviewed some of the teachers who were involved in the protests.

Regarding the local elections (27 articles), the elections for the Capital were predominantly in the focus, with analysis of campaigns of the major parties. In every issue *Kapital* gave the prognosis of two most known Bulgarian Agencies for social and market analysis - Market Links and Alpha Research, about the outcome of the elections in the Capital and analysis of the political campaign. Much of attention was given to the acting mayor of Sofia, Boiko Borisov and his newly founded party, the CEDB. The magazine was speculating whether it was possible for him to win in the first round. It is interesting to mention that in these four issues *Kapital* had four larger articles about the CEDB and Boiko Borisov, and all other parties were described in joint articles. Only once *Kapital* gave attention to the possible unification of the historic right parties with the part of the NMSS in the context of the candidacy of Martin Zaimov for the mayor of Sofia (he was a joint candidate of the DSB and the UDF). Some attention was also given to the MRF, commenting their local governance in the town of Gabrovo, which was experiencing, at the time, great ethnic tensions. Regarding the other towns, in the first three issues, *Kapital* was debating about the prospectives of the major parties in the three biggest towns of Bulgaria (except Sofia): Burgas, Varna and Plovdiv,

In the third interval *Kapital* gave most of its attention to the topic because of which the interval was chosen - from the sample of 39 articles, two thirds were devoted to the issue of local elections.

### 3.8.4 - Discourse analysis

#### Ataka

By comparing media images during these three periods we can notice the decisive difference between writing of these two paper media. “Ataka” uses its newspaper as a transmitter of the day to day party’s politics towards the possible supporters. The topics which are covered are usually used in the context of the goals of “Ataka”, outlined in

its programmatic documents and previous statements of the leaders. It is possible to see that one and the same spiral of regular topics is floating trough the issues from the used sample periods:

1. anti-system messages – about the bad performance of the government resulting in the consequences for the majority of population (rising of prices, protests of the teachers, corruption, rising of the level of criminality etc).
2. anti-MRF messages – cases of cooperation of leaders of other parties with Ahmed Dogan; buying of votes; “voting excursions” of the Turks with Bulgarian citizenship etc.
3. anti-Turkish messages – directed against the foreign politics of the Republic of Turkey; about Armenian genocide; about the Turkish engagement in Iraq; about the links of the MRF and official Ankara; against Turkish accession to the EU etc.
4. anti-USA messages – criticising of the USA foreign politics, with giving the accent to its engagement in Iraq
5. Euro-sceptic messages – transmission of doubts about the current functioning of the EU and about the Bulgarian perspective in it
6. anti-Roma messages – constant reporting about the cases of “Gypsy Criminality” in the country: stealing of electric cables, beatings of the ordinary Bulgarian citizens
7. promotion of the party leaders – most of the topics were devoted to the party leader – Volen Siderov, but also to the leaders of the local boards and members of the National Parliament and EP
8. promotion of the “nationalists” (moderate or far right parties) from Europe – articles about the National Front in France, Fidesz’s protests in Hungary, victory of the right in Switzerland etc.

All of these topics were usually used trough the context of the regular daily themes. For example, the protests of the teachers are presented as a clear example of political incapability of the governing majority. The titles are also significant, due to the fact that with them “Ataka” draws attention on just one particular side of the daily theme like *The teachers did not take disparaging 32%* (raise of payments) without explaining all of the aspects of the topics. Or the article under the name *The European Union laid its hands on our personal data-* the title implies that the EU wants the personal data of Bulgarians, but in fact article is explaining that the EU wants to make a database of all tourists from the third countries. “Ataka” also uses the nicknames for their political



opponents, to outline their bad sides. For example, the president of the Republic of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov is usually called in the articles "Goce", according to his code name in the Bulgarian intelligence service. The editorial board is obviously trying to raise negative emotions towards issues that Ataka is criticizing.

These themes are used particularly during the elections. For example, during the second sample interval there was practically no news about the MRF or the Republic of Turkey. During the first and the third interval, while the election campaigns were in its peak, almost every issue of the newspaper brought negative news about the Bulgarian Turks, the Republic of Turkey or the MRF. It is interesting to mention the insisting of "Ataka" on the issue of Armenian genocide. The moves of the USA Congress Commission for the Armenian genocide in 1915 were transmitted in apparently positive light, unlike the other news regarding the USA. Obviously, when needed "Ataka" uses even its "enemies" to underline their priority politics which was at that moment the issue of genocide. "Ataka" employs Armenian genocide to evoke the emotions of Bulgarians towards memories of the massacres in Bulgaria, committed by the soldiers of the Ottoman empire in 1876 and 1913.

It would be also interesting to mention that in few articles during these three periods "Ataka" was addressing the issue of immigration in Western Europe in an extremely negative manner. For example, the riots in France during 2007 were given the epithet "immigrant riots". Thus, it can be expected that this topic would become significant with the rise of immigration to Bulgaria from the third countries which would probably happen in the near future.

"Ataka" is using its newspaper to present a selective picture of the political issues which is usually addressing in its own political discourse. Objectivity in the articles is rare, with tendentious emotional criticising of the daily politics. Other politicians and parties are presented in black and white images, usually underlining the negative sides of their politics, often with the words which are breaching the area of "politically correct".

## Kapital

The magazine *Kapital* was offering much wider scope of information, with respect to the objective informing of the readers. Without a doubt, it represents the liberal, pro-European stream of thought, in accordance with the predominant mainstream political course in the country, since the changes in 1996-1997. The texts of the magazine have the critical edge towards all political parties, but with the slight sympathy for the right part of the political scene – namely the historic right parties of the Bulgarian political scene, the UDF and the DSB. Having in mind that these parties are barely crossing the threshold on the national elections, the magazine gave more attention than needed to their possible joining of forces, or their joint candidate at the elections. *Kapital* was also giving much of attention to the present mayor of Sofia, Boiko Borisov and his party CEDB, but that can be understood as an attempt to analyse their latest successes on

the elections in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the objective informing is a standard respected in almost all of the articles in the magazine. That is visible especially in its "Theme of the issue" sector, when the journalists offer approach to the topic from different sides, with allowing different experts or involved persons to express their opinion. Despite their orientation, the texts about the EU accession are critical, without desire to create a negative or positive image of the process of the EU integration.

To conclude, these two paper media are opposite, to the extent of antipodes. The first one, newspaper *Ataka* is creating quite subjective media images orientated towards the specific part of population, namely supporters or possible supporters of the political party "Ataka". Its texts are suffering a general lack of objectivity, with expressed xenophobic tendencies, especially towards the Roma and the Bulgarian Turks. The news are filtered, by choosing those which correspond the best to the ideology and politics of the political party "Ataka". Clearly, although it is sold almost everywhere (it is not published in the form of internal party newspaper) it could be perceived as the party media, or the paper correspondent to the SKAT television.



Rally of "Ataka" on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2008, Bulgarian national holiday

The second, *Kapital* magazine offers articles with a wider scope of topics, with an attempt to respect objective journalism. The approach to almost every topic is much more serious, with offering of different points of view to the same subject.

## 3.9 - "Ataka" in comparative perspective – the Serbian Radical Party

In the previous chapters we have discussed the international cooperation of the political party "Ataka", but it is clear that the roots and internal development of West



European extreme right parties is quite different than the origins of “Ataka”. These parties are coming from the states which did not experience the period of fifty years of the communist rule. Moreover, they did not experience the heavy transition period during the 1990s. West European countries have a long democratic tradition, with the establish patterns of democratic parliamentary representation. The different historical path that West European states have experienced caused the formation of different cleavages in the society influencing the appearance of the parties with different political orientation and goals.

Bulgaria, with its history and development, before and after the World War II, is quite different and particular, similar to the development of other countries of the Soviet camp. The best would be to compare the development of the political party “Ataka” with some of the parties of similar ideological background from the neighbouring countries. There are two cases from the neighbouring countries where it is possible to draw parallels between “Ataka”, the Serbian Radical Party and the party Greater Romania. For our purpose the Serbian Radical Party (further in the text SRP) will be taken and the comparison in wide range of topics will be done: historical background, programme, structure, parliamentary activity etc.

### 3.9.1 - Historical background

Unlike “Ataka”, the Serbian Radical Party is the party which is active on the political scene of Serbia and other territories populated by Serbs for more than 18 years in one form or another. Still, it differs from “Ataka” in claiming of the legacy of historic Serbian parties from the end of the XIX and throughout the XX century until the end of the World War II. But this self-identification was not of the imminent importance for the present identity of the Serbian Radical Party. The real source for its background lies in the out-turn of the dramatic events in the late 1980s in the former Yugoslavia - the beginning of the brutal civil war. At that time, various groups gathered around the opposition intellectuals and dissidents, of whom some were nationalistic, preaching the revenge for the “misfortunes” that happened to the Serbian people after the formation of the second Yugoslavia. This “programme”, in its weakest variant, presumed redefinition of the position of the Serbian people in the Socialist Yugoslavia. In its extreme variant it presumed the redefinition of the republics’ borders within Yugoslavia, with a creation of one federal unit comprising all territories populated by Serbs. One of these groups was summoned around the charismatic personality of the well known Serbian dissident – Vojislav Šešelj. He was the head of various extremist political entities, which had even their own paramilitary squads on the war fields in

Croatia and Bosnia. In the beginning of 1991, the Serbian Radical Party was finally created out of various factions. At the second parliamentary elections in 1992 the party managed to pass the threshold of 5% and enter the Parliament. .

Party’s identity was based on the extreme nationalist ideology, which presumed the creation of the Greater Serbia which should comprise present territory of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of Croatia. Their harsh nationalistic rhetoric allowed them to participate regularly in the national parliament of Serbia, but also in the parliaments of the unrecognised Republic of Srpska Krajina (in Croatia), Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Montenegro. Their structure was spread to all those territories which were perceived as the integral parts of the future Greater Serbia. During the 1990s, this party was most of the time in opposition, but reaching high levels of popularity. After the beginning of the Kosovo crisis in 1999, the Serbian Radical Party made a coalition with the Socialist Party of Serbia and created the Government which would lead the country for the following three years. Their governing period ended in citizens’ protests on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2000 and since then the SRP is in the opposition.

After the incrimination of the leader of the party for the crimes against humanity before the International Tribunal for the War Crimes in former Yugoslavia, and his departure to Sheveningen, the party changed its image. From one extreme nationalist party, the SRP became a party which is, at least declaratively, mainly oriented to fight against corruption and criminal. Under the leadership of Tomislav Nikolić (deputy president of the SRP) and Aleksandar Vučić (secretary general of the SRP) the SRP became the strongest party in the national parliament and the leading opposition force. Still, they remain undesirable as partners because of their anti-European and anti-Western platform and none of other political parties were willing to create the parliamentary majority with them.

### 3.9.2 - Programme

Similarly like “Ataka”, the programmatic documents are short and not comprehensive. The first one – “The Programme of the Serbian Radical Party”, corresponds to the “20 Principles” of “Ataka” in content and length. The programme consists of twenty paragraphs which are divided in thematic blocs, similar to the way that “Ataka” did it. The differences exist in those areas where the background of the problem is different. For example, Serbia did not experience the ethnic model like it is in Bulgaria, so the national minorities and their rights for political organising are constitutionally recognized. Nevertheless, like “Ataka”, the SRP is opposing the

creation of any autonomous regions in Serbia which could carry the ethnic background<sup>94</sup>. Regarding the rights of national minorities, the SRP is strictly for the respect of all signed international conventions like the Framework Convention on Human Rights, which, according to the words of the deputy president of "Ataka", Anton Sirakov, is an obstacle for the Bulgarian national politics.

The main part of the programme of the SRP is the national unification - the SRP is interested in the recreation of the conditions for the formation of Greater Serbia, in previously mentioned borders – what presumes the strengthening of the relations with Montenegro, Bosnian entity of the Republic of Srpska and support of political continuity of the Republic of Srpska Krajina. Bulgarian process of national unification is finished due to the outcome of the World Wars and Balkan Wars in the XX century, and the only partially open question that remained in the 1990s was the question of Macedonian nation. But in their statements and programmatic documents, leaders of "Ataka" never expressed openly that their goal is the creation of Greater Bulgaria. Nevertheless, similarly to "Ataka" which sees Turkey as the greatest foreign peril, the SRP puts accent on the Catholicism and Vatican, and its enforcers - Croats.



Vojislav Šešelj and Saddam Hussein

In the international cooperation, the SRP expresses the same views as "Ataka" with insisting on reinforcing of the relations with Russia, China, Japan, India and the countries of the Arab world. Like "Ataka", the SRP is extremely anti-NATO orientated. Regarding the relation towards the EU, the SRP keeps ambivalent standpoint: they are not mentioning the EU accession as their goal, but also they are not underlining their disagreement with it, like in the case of the NATO.

Common points between these two parties are possible also to find in the field of economic issues. Corruption is emphasized as the greatest peril for the development of the national economy, thus the SRP is proposing a strict anti-corruption programme. It also proposes the revision of privatization, but in a different manner than "Ataka",

94 Српска радикална странка, Програм, - <http://www.oo-srs-subotica.org.yu/latin/programL.html> [Retrieved 3rd June 2008]

since the SRP is not addressing the re-nationalisation of the privatized enterprises, but just revising the privatization to ensure more justified allocation of the former social property. The state should remain involved just in the key industries important for the national interest, such is the oil industry.

### 3.9.3 - Party Structure and leadership

The structure of the SRP is much more complex than the one of "Ataka", due to the fact that this party has its branches in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The organs of the party are the following (put in order by its importance): Fatherland Congress (corresponds to the Congress of the party), Central Fatherland Directorate (Main Board), President, Deputy President, Vice-Presidents, General Secretary, Presidential Collegium, Statute Commission, and Supervision Board<sup>95</sup>. Unlike "Ataka", the Statute and other documents foresaw a much more democratic functioning of the party. Nevertheless, during its existence the SRP membership and the rest of the leadership were demonstrating almost a blind obedience to the decisions of their leader, Vojislav Šešelj.

Since its founding, the leadership of the party has not been changed, except in some rare cases. The president of the party, the deputy president, secretary general and almost all vice presidents remained on their posts since their first election. It is possible to conclude that although the SRP is formally a democratic party with established democratic procedures, it acts more like a classical leadership party. Still, during its whole history, the membership showed a great amount of loyalty and mobility during the election period, so it cannot be classified as a party - movement with weak links between the party core and the party membership.

Uncontested leader of the party, throughout the whole period, has been Vojislav Šešelj. He was the elected president of the SRP in February 1992 and since then he was re-elected on every Fatherland Congress that was held. During the period 1992 – 2003, Šešelj was the president of the parliamentary group of the SRP in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia and the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, except in the period 1998-2000 when he was the vice-Prime Minister of the Yugoslav Government. Vojislav Šešelj was also the candidate on all of the presidential elections in Serbia from 1990 to 2002. At the elections in 1997, he entered the second round against the presidential candidates of the Socialist Party of Serbia on two occasions (elections were repeated due to the low out-turn in the second round of the first elections).

95 Српска радикална странка, Статут, <http://www.srs.org.yu/pdf/misc/Statut%20SRS.pdf> [Retrieved 3rd June, 2008] p.4





Vojislav Šešelj in the Hague Tribunal

Šešelj is also known as a writer of more than one hundred controversial books on political and historical themes. These books are mainly covering the topics related to the Serbian political scenes, Yugoslav wars, Serbian nation and "international enemies of Serbia". The titles of books are rather colourful: *Roman Catholic project of the Artificial Croatian Nation*, *Hrtkovci affair and the Ustashi Prostitute Nataša Kandić*, *Pontifex Maximus of the Satan's Church – John Paul II*, *The Vicar of Antichrist – villain pope Benedict XVI*, *Chetnic Voivoda before the Hague tribunal*, *Sadam Husein against the aggressive Globalism* etc. In February 2003 Šešelj voluntarily gave in to the International tribunal for the war crimes in Hague, even before it was announced that he is under the charge for crimes against humanity and the violation of the customs of war. Ever since, he is in the imprisonment in Sheveningen, while waiting for the end of the process. Still, his positions in the party remained intact: he was re-elected again on the post of the president of the party, despite the fact that he is absent.

For five years, since the beginning of the Šešelj's imprisonment, party has been led by the deputy president of the SRP, Tomislav Nikolić. Nikolić was one of the initiators of the creation of the Serbian Radical Party, and immediately he became the first and, to this date the only, deputy president of the SRP. In 1992 he was elected the MP in the Parliament of Serbia for the first time, where he became the deputy president of the SRP's parliamentary group. During the coalition of the SPS and the SRP, from 1998 to 2000, Nikolić was at the duty of vice-Prime Minister of Serbia. At the historic elections for the president and parliament of FR Yugoslavia, Tomislav Nikolić was the candidate of the SRP for the post of the president. In February, 2003 he became the official leader of the party, due to Šešelj's imprisonment, and this period is perceived as the most successful in the history of the party. Nikolić gave a totally new image to the party, because of his style and behaviour in public, which is quite different to Šešelj's stage performance. The electorate of the SRP in this period was more than doubled.

At the Serbian presidential elections in the autumn of 2003, Nikolić got the

majority of votes but the elections were cancelled because of the low out turn at the elections. Two more times, in 2004 and 2008, he was a candidate for the president of Serbia, and both times he had the majority of votes in the first round of elections, but he lost in the second round from Boris Tadić, candidate of the Democratic Party. After the parliamentary elections in 2007, in May, Nikolić was elected for the President of the Parliament of Serbia, which caused protests from the EU and the Council of Europe.

Like his mentor, Vojislav Šešelj, Tomislav Nikolić also has a quite impressive bibliography, but the topics and language in them are quite moderate and humble. Some of the titles of his books are: *Stolen Victory*, *Šešelj for President*, *In the Parliament's Trenches*, *Neo-communist Parliament* etc.

The third most important person in the party is the secretary general of the SRP, Aleksandar Vučić. Just year after he became a member of the SRP in 1993, Vučić was elected for the secretary general of the party and remained on that post to this date. He was elected for the MP in the Serbia's National Parliament. After the departure of Vojislav Šešelj to Hague, Vučić was elected for the post of the deputy president of the SRP's parliamentary group. In the period when the SRP participated in the Government of Serbia and Government of Yugoslavia, he was on the post of the Minister for Media. During this time, due to the fact that Yugoslavia was under harsh international pressure because of the Kosovo crisis, Vučić pushed new, highly restrictive Law on media, which became one of the crucial points of the opposition critique of the regime (the explanation for this law was that some media and the opposition parties became agents of foreign enemy forces).

After the electoral loss in 2000, and SRP's return to the seats of the opposition in the Parliament, Vučić again became the MP. It was perceived in public that he was one of those who influenced the SRP's strengthening since 2003. Vučić became the role model of the SRP's new generation. His image was changed to a pro-modern man whose only goal is the modernisation of Serbia. This change was mostly visible during the municipal election in 2004 and 2008, when he was the SRP's candidate for the mayor of Belgrade. First time he lost in the second round from the candidate of the Democratic Party.



Tomislav Nikolić



### 3.9.4 - Party's development

The curve of electoral successes of the SRP is rather unstable. During the 1990s, the SRP was varying from the second strongest party in the National Parliament to the party which gained only 10 % at the elections in 2000. After Nikolić and Vučić were left to lead the party, the SRP has largely changed its public image and ways of political struggle. In the first period, when Šešelj was leading the party, its public image was to a large extent connected with his theatrical and even rude behaviour in the public life. MPs of the SRP used the National Parliament as a stage for performance, in the similar way that “Ataka” is acting in the Bulgarian National Parliament. Abusing of the colleagues from other parties, throwing a glass of water at the president of the parliament are just some of the examples. But, it must be pointed out that the SRP never had the disrespect for the parliament as an institution and its role in the political life. Even in the period of 1990s, the SRP was respecting parliamentary procedures and rules, despite the fact that their behaviour was not on the same level.

Nevertheless, the change when Šešelj left was surprising. Party officials changed their way of behaviour – extremist statements became rare, and the accent of their rhetoric was given to fight against corruption and criminality, and the unfair political measures that the West had imposed on Serbia - emphasizing the cases of Kosovo, Hague tribunal and the unfair requests of the international monetary institutions. Still, the SRP was also rhetorically opposing the whole second transition period, from 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2000. After the parliamentary elections in 2003 they started to pick fruit because of the fact that they were the only party which was not cooperating with the post-October political elite. None of the measures imposed by the new Government after 2000 were affecting the officials of the SRP since the majority of them had the MP immunity before the court. Thus, their image became quite different than the image of all other parties – their officials were not prosecuted after the October 2000 (unlike the officials of their coalition partners from the Socialist Party of Serbia) and they were opposing all painful transition measures brought by the governments of Zoran Đinđić, Zoran Živković and Vojislav Koštunica. Therefore, they were perceived by one part of the electorate as the alternative to the ruling elite. Furthermore, their public media presentation became more and more westernised. New ways of behaviour and political correctness allowed them to get more close to the middle class, more educated than their traditional voters. Just recently, the SRP even declaratively accepted the accession of Serbia to the EU in the near future.

The consequence could have been expected. Polished and polite radicals at the parliamentary elections 2003 (first one after 2000) got around one third of all votes and

thus became the strongest party in the parliament. But, none of the post-October parties were eager to make a coalition with them. On the local level the situation was different. In the town of Novi Sad, the SRP became the ruling party together with the SPS and the Democratic Party of Serbia. Elsewhere, some more interesting coalitions were formed. In the Bečej municipality, local government was formed by the SRP and one small Hungarian minority party. This out turn of events suggested that there is a chance for this party to face a transformation to a moderate right wing political force, something like it had happened to the Croatian Democratic Community in Croatia. But, their allegiance to the imprisoned leader and refusing to accept some of the achievements of post-October transition left them in the political dead end. The SRP is still the biggest party in the Serbian National Parliament, but they remain in the opposition.

#### Similarities between “Ataka” and the SRP

1. Both parties are insisting on the creation of the national states, only dimensions are different. For the SRP the process of the national unification is not finished since the project of Yugoslavia in XX century was a failure. Thus the project should be revised to create the Greater Serbia of all territories populated by Serbs, but national minorities are acceptable. “Ataka”, is insisting on the extreme application of the Bulgarian ethnic model, where all national minorities in Bulgaria should accept the Bulgarian national identity despite their ethnic or religious background.

2. In the economic and social parts, their programmes are almost identical - both parties expressed imminent care for the parts of the society which can be perceived as the losers of transition process. The provisions of their programmes like the revision of the privatization or re-nationalization are pointed in that direction. Moreover, the characteristic of “Ataka” and the SRP is their declarative insisting on the fight against corruption<sup>96</sup>, which is one of the endemic problems of the transition.

3. Same goes for the international relations – both parties are suspicious to the NATO and European integrations, and quite open for strengthening of relations with Russia, China, India and the Arab world.

The differences are visible in the area of domestic politics.

1. During its existence the SRP was always respecting the parliamentary representative democracy, without offering the alternate solutions. On the other hand, “Ataka” is deeply dissatisfied with the ways of functioning of the Bulgarian democracy, thus offering a model of more direct representation, with weak parties and movements and a strong leader of the country.

2. Moreover, the SRP has clear anti-clerical image, which is backed in the history

<sup>96</sup> Сrpска радикална странка, Економски програм, [http://www.politickiforum.org/dokumenta/15\\_srs\\_program.pdf](http://www.politickiforum.org/dokumenta/15_srs_program.pdf) [Retrieved 3rd June,2008]

of the Serbian radicalism, which was by its origin leftist peasant movement. “Ataka”, as we have seen, is counting on the stronger influence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the political life of the country.

In Bulgaria, the party of this type is quite a new phenomenon, created at the moment when it became clear that the transition is over, as a kind of protest of the dissatisfied parts of the society. The SRP was a genuine expression of the extreme Serbian nationalism in the time of the Yugoslav wars in 1990s, but lately it has been changing its identity towards the direction which was taken by “Ataka”. But, in this change the SRP is showing much more moderate approach, with acceptance of the pro-western ways of representation in public, moving slowly towards the centre right part of the political scene- capturing the electorate composed of middle class. Still, the heavy burden of their legacy from 1990s and the personality of Vojislav Šešelj are preventing the full transformation.

The SRP also showed that it is capable to survive the absence of its leader, and to create an image of the party with normal democratic procedures within its structure. “Ataka”, from this perspective is still the typical leadership party, created around the charismatic personality of Volen Siderov. With time it will be clear if “Ataka” is a phenomenon which would become the regular part of the Bulgarian political scene, in the way that the SRP did it.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The contemporary political scene in Bulgaria is rather peculiar in comparison with the political scenes and discourses which are dominant in most of the countries of the EU. The period of fragile democracy, which was present during the 1990s, was characterized by a sharp clash between the two leading political blocs, which produced a false image that the political system itself is stable. In fact, the system was, as Ernesto Laclau defined it, **less well structured**, requiring some kind of periodical recomposition. The country was passing through the process of transition, due to which a dramatic social change happened, thus evoking the rise of populist discourse when the dominant party polarization became relaxed. Populist discourse itself faced diversification by time, resulting in the appearance of the three separated waves of populism. The second wave, represented by the political party “Ataka” employed the extreme populist discourse.

The main objective of this research was to present specific conditions which influenced the appearance of “Ataka” on the Bulgarian political scene, thus to present the analytical profile of the party. In the text of the thesis few causes of the phenomenon were identified:

Firstly, that is a specific way in which Bulgarian political scene was developing during the 1990s. Both blocks which dominated the scene in the 1990s created the political customs which resulted in the formation of clientèle circles. Despite the achievements of the transition process, among the electorate a high distrust in the political elite, which conducted the reforms, is present. **The reforms, as Diter Segert outlined, brought political freedoms and the economic efficiency, but they did not introduce economic security for common people, thus resulted in their impoverishment.** The corruption scandals were connected in public with parties’ clientèle circles, hence with the political parties and their political elites. **These factors combined together created a suitable climate for a political discourse which would challenge the transition process in total as wrong and dangerous.**

The other part of the identity of “Ataka” is based on the radical critique of functioning of the Bulgarian ethnic model. Bulgarian ethnic model itself was foreseen as a tool which would prevent the ethnic cleavages in the country, which threatened Bulgaria during 1980s. As much as successful in preventing ethnic clashes, its direct consequence is the party **Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)**, whose structure and electorate is composed predominantly of the ethnic Turks. From 2001 this party is highly influential in the governments of Bulgaria and affecting certain areas of domestic politics and business, in accordance with its own interest. The role of the MRF caused a great amount of dissatisfaction among the Bulgarian citizens, thus this dissatisfaction

with the political subject is being transformed to the ethnic cleavage between the ethnic Bulgarians and Turks. “Ataka” successfully employed the anti-Turkish platform at the moment when this dissatisfaction reached its peak, before the parliamentary elections 2005.

The third factor which allowed the radical political discourse of “Ataka” to come into focus was the inducement of a **new populist logic** in political practice, with the appearance of Simeon Saksoburgotski on the political scene of Bulgaria in 2001. His involvement was based on the absence of any visible political ideology and blurred promises about the significant improvement of the economic situation in the country, thus opening **a way for the acceptance of a populist logic in the future**. Simeon outlined his goals in the relation “**us versus them**”, where “us” were the common people, represented by his political personality. “Them” were the corrupted political elites. In other words, Simeon and his movement employed some of the elements of populism, like the appeal to the “people”, through one unifying political figure with a historic right to do so. “Scapegoat tactics” was not used in the extreme way: under attack were just the by-products of the transition like the “corrupted” political parties and selfish political elite. Clearly, there is almost nothing in common with the pro-Western populist discourse of Simeon and his party and the extreme one of “Ataka”. Hence, his soft version of populism paved the way for the two other incarnations of populism.

And fourthly, there was **the influence of the media**. The absence of the adequate measures for controlling the independent media, allowed the discourses out of the area of “political correctness” to break out to the surface. The content of these discourses were not just questioning and contesting country’s orientation towards the West, but also questioning of the results of the “Revival process”, role of the Jewish lobbies in the contemporary world etc. Moreover, these media were used as the main transmitters for the messages of “Ataka”, which finally broke out of the media isolation. With its support, “Ataka” got the public tribune where the contact between them and their possible electorate was established.

Ideological and political background of “Ataka” is composite, made by overlapping of the populist political logic and the extreme right ideology, close to the ideologies of the West European extreme right parties. Regarding the populist part of its identity “Ataka” presumes the following:

1. An appeal to the people as a whole - “Ataka” constructs the “people” from the Bulgarian citizens who are pure ethnic Bulgarians or accept the Bulgarian identity as their own. So, the significant “us” that “Ataka” represents are the ethnic Bulgarians who are under the “threat of losing their state” and “in danger of biological extinction”. Yet, the party presents itself as a unique protector of the Bulgarian interests. The significant “them” or the enemy, are the corrupted political elites, national minorities, foreigners etc.

2. “Scapegoat tactics” is used in series of issues:

- Ethnic threat: the MRF and the Bulgarian Turks - ethnic group which is undermining the Bulgarian state itself; Roma – isolated strata of the Bulgarian society with criminal tendencies, but supported by the foreigners and ruling political elite; The ethnic Macedonians: artificially invented nation in Bulgaria, whose aim is to split Bulgarian national corpus.

- Foreign threat: “Ataka” simplifies the picture of the USA and, to an extent, the EU foreign politics towards Bulgaria, with emphasizing the role of the NATO, the IMF and the World Bank as the institutions whose aim is to impoverish small nations. Moreover, it creates a fear of losing other foreign markets like Russian, Chinese or Indian, due to the predominant Bulgarian orientation towards the West.

- Corrupted political elites: “Ataka” points to political elites as the enemies of Bulgarians because of their responsibility for ruining of the system of social and health care, for the process of illegal privatization etc.

3. A challenge to the achievements of the post-industrial society - “Ataka” is constantly underlining its anti-globalization standpoints. Moreover, this party pushes the Euro-sceptic image through contesting the supranational institutions.

4. “Ataka” challenges the present system of representative democracy by addressing a more relaxed system for the political engagement. In the same time, it promotes referendums as the ultimate political solution for the important questions.

Except being populist in methods and political logic, “Ataka” shares most of the common characteristics with the extreme right parties from Western Europe. These similarities are even more underlined by the cooperation of “Ataka” with some of the these parties on the European level, thus with joint actions and common programme of the (former) common group *Identity, Sovereignty, Tradition* in the EP. Regarding previously given crucial characteristics of the extreme right parties, as it was outlined by Piero Ignazi, it is possible to conclude the following:

1. “Ataka” pledges for more “law and order”, with campaigning against “Gypsy criminals”. The West European extreme right parties’ demand for more “law and order” is connected with the issue of immigration. In both cases, under the demand stands the platform which is against the marginalized group of people who are, to an extent, “outcasts” of the majority of population.

2. “Ataka” does not employ the anti-immigrant rhetoric due to the fact that Bulgaria still did not experience significant import of foreign workers. But, its rhetoric is aimed against other “alien” factors in the Bulgarian state, like Turks and Gypsies.



3. "Ataka" promotes the defense of the natural community which is embodied in the Bulgarian national state, but endangered by the "alien" factor in the country. This is visible in their opposing the outcomes of the Bulgarian ethnic model, promotion of the re-institutionalization of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and special protective measures for the Bulgarian language.

4. "Ataka" is promoting the reduction of the negative effects of globalization with introduction of the special protective measures for the Bulgarian economy. In other words, the party is promoting the protection of the economy until it is able to compete on the international market.

5. "Ataka" relays almost completely on the personality of its leader, Volen Siderov. His personal charisma and political actions are the driving force of the party.

6. Again, the discourse of "Ataka" is highly critical towards the supra-national institutions of the EU, and promotes reinstating of the national sovereignty in all its former aspects.

7. "Ataka" is not very much engaged on the issue of protection of the traditional societal bonds. It is visible only in the part of the programme where "Ataka" is opting for the reform of the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church within the state system.

8. As mentioned above, "Ataka" proposes the reform of the system of representative democracy, and referendums as a tool for more direct link between the governing elite/leader and the citizens.

9. The official discourse of "Ataka" is bursting with **different theories of conspiracy**:

- The Turkish danger – official Ankara uses the MRF as its tool for obtaining more influence in Bulgaria to conduct a new genocide against the Bulgarian people.

- Foreign conspiracy in order to weaken Bulgaria – this theory is based on the activities of the international monetary institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, which are imposing heavy measures on Bulgarians and its economy.

- Jewish conspiracy – this theory is absent from the official programmatic discourse, but it is present in the background of the party, through writings and public statements of its leader Volen Siderov. It is closely connected to the second conspiracy theory, with implying that the complete foreign policy of the USA is controlled by the Jewish lobbies. Moreover, this conspiracy is not directly aimed just against Bulgaria, but against the Christianity as a whole. From this matrix derive the standpoints of "Ataka" against the involvement in the NATO and international monetary institutions.

10. Like some other far right parties, "Ataka" proposes something called "social

capitalism", which can be regarded as the mixed system of free enterprise and social protection. State should be more involved in the protection of the national economy, especially in providing free social and health security system, but the country's economy should be based on the capitalist relations.

From above said it is possible to conclude that "Ataka" does belong to the modern extreme right family of parties. Speculations of some Bulgarian scholars that "Ataka" is in fact extreme left party, because of its programme of re-nationalization and insisting on the state controlled systems of social and health care does not hold the ground. The ideas of "Ataka" about the re-nationalization are presumed by the party officials as a temporary move with which the subjects under the process would be "rescued" from the hands of the new owners. Subjects would be later again privatized, but fairly. Therefore, there is nothing in common with the far left discourse. Ernesto Laclau said that the shift of the electorate from one to the other, completely ideologically opposite political discourse, is not unusual, and illustrated it by the so called "left lepenism" or "workers lepenism" (a part of the electorate which are the supporters of the National Front in France were originally the supporters of the Communists<sup>97</sup>) Then, why it should be unusual that the party, which discourse is originally far right, employs some parts of the identity of the left, in order to ease this shift? On the other hand, political discourse of most of the West European extreme right parties contains similar provisions on the social protection performed by the state. The provision on re-nationalization can be seen as a peculiar characteristic of "Ataka" which is not in discordance with the far right identity. Moreover, some of the West European extreme parties are showing much larger discordance in the economic parts of the programme. For example, the platforms of the Social Alliance and Tricolour Flame from Italy which are close to the fascist concept of corporate state and their partner from Belgium, the Flemish Interest, is the adherent of neo-liberal concepts. Now, we should return to the theoretical standpoints, as presented by Pietro Ignazi. If we accept that the dominant cleavage between the left and right has shifted from the classical class cleavage to the post-material one, then it becomes obvious that some classical leftist provisions which are embodied by "Ataka" do not threaten the far right image of the party. In the contemporary world, the discourse of the modern extreme right is mainly oriented to restrain the introduction of the post-material values.

Moreover, our analysis of the the electorate of "Ataka" has shown that it is rather heterogeneous, and accepts the messages of this party on the different levels. Three basic types of of the supporters of "Ataka" were identified. The first type are the people who were linked with the former communist regime or were involved on the lower levels of its political elite. Since they were unable to adapt to the new regime, they failed to be a part of the new political system, thus lost their privileges. This part of the electorate of "Ataka" is sensitive to the anti-western and, to an extent, pro-Russian message of "Ataka". The second type are the people who are heirs of Bulgarians, forced to abandon

their homes at the end of XIX and beginning of the XX century, due to the military operations in Macedonia and Eastern Trace. Their common characteristic is an extreme nationalism and unwillingness to accept other ethnic populations in their neighborhood, hence they accepted easily the extreme anti-Turkish discourse of “Ataka”. Moreover, people from ethnically mixed regions, where the MRF’s local politics is dominant, must be included as well, thus ethnic cleavages are mostly present. The third type are the people who are almost unanimously accepted by scholars for the real electorate of “Ataka” – losers of the transition process. The process of transition, as mentioned above, resulted in the impoverishment of the common people and disappearance of the social and economic security. Among them are the socially endangered strata of the population like the pensioners or people employed in the institutions dependent on the state subsidies. The anti-elite and anti-system discourse of “Ataka” found the interested parts of electorate in this group. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the picture of the electorate of “Ataka” as composed mainly of “blue collars” and the lower strata of the society does not hold the grounds. The political message of “Ataka” is built in layers, hence it is much more profound than it seems at the first glance, and it is directed towards the people who consider themselves “endangered” in some way: socially, economically or nationally. The party is successfully using fears and dissatisfaction to create a peculiar anti-system patchwork platform with which different types of dissatisfied people can identify.

Regarding the discussion about the ideological orientation of “Ataka”, except the theoretical proofs and the analysis of the electorate, there is a third fact that can prove that “Ataka” is a far right party. Its internal self identification (they usually refer to themselves as “nationalists”) can be seen in the type of partners chosen on the international level. These parties in the literature and praxis are regarded as the far right parties, and “Ataka” has found a common platform for cooperation with them in the EP. **Undoubtedly “Ataka” is an extreme right party**, which differs from its partners on the European level in few particular issues based on specific development of Bulgaria in last twenty years. The similarities in this sector are much easier to find with the parties from the neighboring countries which have similar historical experience, but these parties are also falling into the same political group. Nevertheless, the political logic and methods which are employed, and most of their ideological standpoints correspond.

Regarding its internal structure “Ataka” appears as a classical leadership party. Statute constraints for the leader practically do not exist, hence he is able to directly or indirectly control the party from the bottom to the top of the organization. His “iron hand” control of the structure was visible during the process of the fragmentation of the party’s group in the parliament. All of the potential pretenders who could endanger the positions of Volen Siderov were quickly removed from the party’s organization or from its parliamentary group. Thus, he removed almost all other sources which could claim independent legitimacy of existence not connected to his personality. Moreover, the public identity of the party is predominantly based on the personality of Volen Siderov

and the discourse that he evolved during his work in the previous period.

All above said can allow us to speculate about the perspectives of “Ataka” in the future. The extreme populist discourse employed by “Ataka” is familiar in almost all of the countries of the EU. But their success is connected to the importance of the issues that they are addressing, but also to the existence of the moderate right which could possibly embody some parts of its discourse in a less extreme way. “Ataka” has shown that its political discourse is more or less an antipode to the other parties present in the Bulgarian political system. But, this political discourse is highly dependent on the economic and political instability which was created with the transition process and the rise of populism in the country. If this crisis continues we can expect the establishment of “Ataka” as a regular political factor on the political scene of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, some sudden rise of its popularity is hardly imaginable, due to its previous electoral successes – the electoral support remains stable and constant, and the peak of the popular support was probably achieved at the presidential elections in 2006. Probably, if the sudden improvement of the economic situation and the political stabilization take place, the identity of “Ataka” could be threatened, and can cause the leveling of the public support. Nevertheless, it is possible to expect that “Ataka” in order to adapt to a new situation would embody, in time, some new issues or put an accent to some parts of its discourse currently not regarded as central parts of its public identity.

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## APPENDIX

### Ataka as a supporter of the new minority government of Bulgaria

#### New Chapter, written by author in 2010

In 2008 when this thesis was finished, there was no real sign that *Ataka* would undertake some serious shifts in their attitude and political orientation. During the thesis defence, one of the professors in the commission asked if it is possible that *Ataka* would ever come into power. The candidate replied that the chances for such an outturn were indeed very slim. The specific discourse that *Ataka* employed simply urged for the extreme environment in order to become attractive for the majority of population. Yet, changes are always possible, like it has happened in Serbia with the split of the Serbian Radical Party.

Still nobody was able to foresee that in less than a year *Ataka* would become the only real supporter to the ruling, a pro-European party. Nevertheless, the new constellation of forces on the Bulgarian political scene gives a fresh boost to re-examine the whole topic and to test previous conclusions.

*Ataka* managed to prove its position in the Bulgarian political spectrum and to keep almost the same popular support like at the previous elections<sup>98</sup>. Still, their discourse remained as it was – extremist, but with the tone lowered down. One subchapter of the thesis is devoted to the relations of *Ataka* with the *Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria* (herewith CEDB), where it is outlined that in 2008 both the officials of *Ataka* and *CEBD* did not renounce the possibility of cooperation. The deputy president of *Ataka*, Anton Sirakov, said that the only reason against would be CEDB’s liberal economic programme. Hence even then a potentially solid base for the cooperation existed.

Therefore, in the following text author will try to identify the actual reasons for *Ataka*’s support of Boyko Borisov’s Government, the common characteristics on which this “coalition” lies, and if this cooperation influenced *Ataka*’s own identity.

#### Parliamentary elections 2009 – results and outcomes

In the beginning of 2009 former Bulgarian government led by Sergey Stanishev

<sup>98</sup> See Alpha Research, Assessment of the Activity of the Main Political Parties (permanent monitoring), <http://www.aresearch.org/bg/parties.html>

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faced few serious challenges. Economic Crisis stalled the ongoing economic progress of the country. The minor coalition party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (herewith MRF) has been heavily criticised by the opposition and the media. Its negative image in public<sup>99</sup> affected also its coalition partners, especially after some serious scandals<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, due to the inability of the Government to level the corruption and organized crime, Bulgaria was restricted from using the EU structural funds.

Consequently the outcome of the *2009 Parliamentary Elections* was indeed no surprise. Party of then-mayor of Sofia CEDB, Boyko Borisov, won the majority of votes, becoming the strongest party in the Bulgarian parliament. Due to the Bulgarian election system (combined proportional and majority elections) CEDB got 117 MPs out of 240, although this party got around 40% of votes. However, even this result was insufficient for this party to form the new Government alone– it was forced to search for the suitable partner among the lesser opposition parties. CEDB based its political campaign on the critique of the former Government and parties which supported it, so it was impossible for this party to negotiate with the BSP and the MRF (Simeon’s party did not manage to breach the 4% threshold). That left only three possible choices: The *Blue Coalition* (coalition of the UDF and the DSB) with 15 MPs, *Ataka* with 21 MPs and the newcomer *Order, Law, Justice* with 10 MPs. This choice should have been easy to make if only ideology and programmatic issues were concerned. The *Blue Coalition* is composed of the two right centre parties from the EPP, sister parties to the CEDB which is also the EPP member. The possibility of their post-electoral coalition was mentioned few times during the campaign. Leaders of the *Blue Coalition* were especially interested in such an outcome, eager for another chance to be in power after the shameful defeat by Simeon at the 2001 Parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, immediately after the elections Borisov opted for the minority CEDB government, supported by at least one of the three above mentioned political groups in the Parliament. The *Blue Coalition* conditioned its support with the formal agreement of the two political subjects about the anti-recession economic programme, while the other two groups proclaimed their support immediately after the elections<sup>101</sup>.

In a few days, Borisov has offered a Memorandum to the potential partners who contained a set of principles and goals on which their support for the minority Government will be based. This document comprised the following provisions<sup>102</sup>:

- Revision of the work of the previous Government, which included criminal

<sup>99</sup> Alpha Research, opt.cit, <http://www.aresearch.org/bg/parties.html>

<sup>100</sup> The most notorious one happened just before the elections, when one private recording of Ahmed Dogan talking about his importance for the decision making in Bulgaria was aired on national Nova Television. More about it Petar Kostadinov, The power is in my hands, Ahmed Dogan tells supporters, Sofia Echo Online, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009, [http://sofiaecho.com/2009/06/25/743487\\_the-power-is-in-my-hands-ahmed-dogan-tells-supporters](http://sofiaecho.com/2009/06/25/743487_the-power-is-in-my-hands-ahmed-dogan-tells-supporters)

<sup>101</sup> See Alex Bivol, “Borisov pledges to cut down on Parliament committees”, Sofia Echo Online, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/07/12/753775\\_borisov-pledges-to-cut-down-on-parliament-committees](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/07/12/753775_borisov-pledges-to-cut-down-on-parliament-committees)

<sup>102</sup> Content of the Memorandum - See Petar Kostadinov, “GERB’s memorandum to right-wing parties”, Sofia Echo Online, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, [http://sofiaecho.com/2009/07/15/755933\\_CEDBs-memorandum-to-right-wing-parties](http://sofiaecho.com/2009/07/15/755933_CEDBs-memorandum-to-right-wing-parties)



proceedings if necessary.

- Revision of the work of previous governments as well, in the similar manner
- Rapid creation and implementation of the anti-crisis measures
- Creation and adopting of new laws on political organising and national referendum
- Quick re-access to the EU funds by implementing new policies that will regain trust of the European partners
- Reform of the parliamentary services, introducing the new parliamentary rulebook etc. The main aim is to regain the trust of citizens in this institution, and in addition to allow and improve cooperation with the civil sector.
- Reform of the Government in order to adapt to the new economic environment – inner functioning, number of ministries, cutting down the administration (as well as numbers of ministries and administration)

The only party that instantly accepted this memorandum was *Ataka*, while the “sister” partner called this document meaningless and without a real purpose. *Law, Order, Justice* switched its position, and refused to support the CEDB, with an ill excuse of Borisov’s behaviour<sup>103</sup>. Since that moment, *Ataka* became an official partner of the CEDB; as the only party that did not question Borisov’s decisions and that did not officially conditioned its support.

## Political programmes vs. populist behaviour. Similarities and differences

The elections resulted with the situation that the only party in the Bulgarian Parliament with the word “European” within its name stepped into informal coalition with a party whose political discourse is opposed to the very fundamentals of the EU.

The closeness of these two parties can be somehow “measured” by the comparison of their formal characteristics and their political behaviour. Firstly, we shall approach their respective programmatic documents. In the thesis *Ataka* has been identified as a right wing extremist party, while the CEDB represents a right centre pro-European party. The programmatic comparison would tell us more about the meaning of these labels and self-image of these parties in respect to the rest of the ideological spectre. Hence we shall outline the ideological closeness/distance of their two competing discourses.

103 See Clive Leviev-Sawyer, “Yanev’s Order Law and Justice party will not sign GERB’s memorandum”, Sofia Echo Online, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2009, [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/07/19/757819\\_yanevs-order-law-and-justice-party-will-not-sign-CEDBs-memorandum](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/07/19/757819_yanevs-order-law-and-justice-party-will-not-sign-CEDBs-memorandum)

*Ataka* did not change its programme(s). The two documents that were previously analysed in the thesis remained, *20 Principles* and *Programme Scheme*, remained in power. For the purpose of this chapter, we shall briefly outline the key points of its programme<sup>104</sup>:

- Struggle against national traitors (MRF, BSP, NMSS and even old political elites). Extreme approach to the defence of the *Bulgarian Ethnic Model*
- Strengthening of the state’s public social services
- Struggle against criminal and corruption with all possible means
- Economic reforms – intention to introduce new system that can be described as “Social capitalism” (see A. Sirakov, Interview)
- Change of political system towards some sort of presidential democracy, yet the idea is not well elaborated
- Foreign policy which clearly comprises some anti-USA, anti-Israel and anti-NATO standpoints. Opposition to the supranational EU – return to the Europe of nations.

In these two documents *Ataka* offers a patchwork of predominantly extreme rightist ideas (with the small addition of certain socialist-communist aspects), outlined as set instant solutions for various real or imagined problems within the country. There is no actual counterpart in some other existing party. However it could be classified as postmodern post material right wing party – which discourse falls between the mainstream and core extremist parties.

From its side, the CEDB offered in 2009 a much more comprehensive and precise document under title *Programme for European Development of Bulgaria*, an upgraded version of the first document issued *New Rightist Deal for Bulgaria* from 2007. This document offered a set of goals which should be reached or at least be in the procedure after the first four years of CEDB’s government. It is possible to divide it in parts:

- **Providing the respect for law and order.** The CEDB pledges for the overall confrontation with the corruption practices and organised crime in the state. Success in this area will guarantee better treatment of Bulgaria in the EU ranks. This party also promotes improvement of the human security, reform of the judiciary system, reducing the administration numbers simultaneously with raising its efficiency and introduction of the good practices etc.

104 More about these two documents: *20 Principles* [http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=), *Programme Scheme* [http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=5](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=5)

- **Acceleration of Bulgarian economy:** adaptation of various measures in order to ensure rapid way out from the economic crisis: need for the dialogue among the state and the representative syndicates and businessmen, introduction of incentive fiscal measures, re-access to the EU funds, effective energy policies, rapid infrastructure development etc.

- **Better life conditions** – more efficient social and health care, efficient separation powers through improved decentralisation, more effective decentralisation, additional environment protection and preservation policies.

- **Development of Human Resources** – reform of the education system, improved funding of national scientific projects – priority to informatics and telecommunication technologies, improved promotion of the Bulgarian national culture in Europe and the world etc.

- **Foreign policy and security** – full support to the EU and NATO policies. Bulgaria’s role is seen as one of the most influential countries on the Balkans, thus helping the final stabilisation of the region. In addition it should also be a stable EU frontier country within the Black Sea region.

It is clear that these two parties have great differences on the programmatic level. On its behalf, *Ataka* offered one xenophobic *catch all* document which is directed towards all kinds of extremists – from extreme left to extreme right. In almost every issue this party has tried to differentiate from the mainstream politics. *Ataka* challenges both present political and economic order of the country, as well as its foreign positioning – towards the EU and NATO. Its primary policies are circuitously against the very foundations of the EU, since they challenge fundamental human rights and freedoms. The sharpest line of critique is directed towards the Euro-Atlantic backbone, the USA as its pillar stone, Israel and Turkey.

However, none of the principles is clearly defined except the “anti” parts, thus allowing *Ataka* to swiftly ignore certain parts of its programme if the situation calls for such a move.

On the other hand the CEDB based most of their practical policies on the policies and demands of the EU, and to lesser extent the NATO. It insists on citizen concept of state, negating ethnic policies of some other political options, among others *Ataka*’s. Hence, their vision is more related to contemporary and realistic challenges like sustainable development, ecology, energetic, infrastructure etc.

But it is also easy to find common ideological ground for these two parties. They both represent themselves (ideologically as well as in the public life) as fierce fighters against systemic corruption and organised crime. Both parties see it as arguably the most urgent problem in the country. *Ataka*, however, is a proponent of sharper measures

than the CEDB, like reintroducing of the death sentence. On this common issue – that the state should deal with corruption and organized crime swiftly and efficiently (if necessary with the strong hand), leaders of both parties have found the programmatic basis for the practical agreement.

In practical matters, Borisov and Siderov have a similar approach towards politics, due to the fact that both of them employ populist logic. The very essence of this logic was explained in the Thesis chapter *Theoretical Framework*. These are the elements that characterize this logic: a clear dichotomy **us** (people which is being represented by a respective party) vs. **them** (corrupted political elites (both CEDB and *Ataka*), various national traitors (*Ataka*) etc.), scapegoat tactics when explaining roots of the problems in the state; both leaders are sending chains of messages without any coherent system, but easily appealing the voters due to the understandable content.

However, these two discourses differ in content – messages that Siderov and Borisov use are on the different levels, therefore they are capable to mobilise (to an extent) different profiles of voters. For instance, **for** the CEDB **them** are embodied in the BSP and its “friendly circles” together with its coalition partner the MRF. But in their critique of this party, the CEDB focuses on their bad practices (for instance, the management of the EU funds etc). On the other hand, for *Ataka* the MRF is the primary target, but its critique is primarily based on the open ethnic hatred. I.E. in the focus of the attack is the fact that the MRF is led and predominantly composed of ethnic Turks (and Muslims).

Since they employ a similar political logic, it was relatively easy for Siderov and Borisov to find an agreement. *Ataka* has the possibility to put away certain parts of his discourse if the situation asks for it. Therefore, Siderov can justify its position with his concern for the good of Bulgaria<sup>105</sup>, thus to focus his electorate on the parts of *Ataka*’s discourse which are connected with the programme of the new government – prosecution of the previous political establishment, preventing the rise of the MRF to power, dealing with corruption and criminal etc. NATO bases, USA, Israel, politics towards Turkey are not being mentioned.

Also, the previous conflicts between these two parties do not represent an obstacle, which also tells something about the profile of these parties. During 2007 local elections, primary target of *Ataka*’s campaign was Boyko Borisov who was then the mayor of Sofia and his city administration. Only two years later *Ataka* fully supported CEDB’s candidate Yordanka Fandukova, because of the “need to beat socialist candidate”<sup>106</sup>. Furthermore, if we look more closely at the Memorandum that *Ataka* signed with CEDB, it is clear that this party agreed to support the pro-EU politics of CEDB.

Indeed *Ataka* has lost bits of the support, but according to the last opinion polls this party has around 7% of stable popular support – therefore it managed to preserve

<sup>105</sup> He outlined it in his interviews several time. See Йова Апостолова, „Лоялността ми към ГЕРБ е 100 процента“, in Trud newspapers online, October 14th 2009, <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=253051>

<sup>106</sup> See Clive Leviev-Sawyer, “Right-wingers to back GERB’s Fandukova to be mayor of Sofia”, in Sofia Echo Online, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2009, [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/10/13/798858\\_right-wingers-to-back-CEDBs-fandukova-to-be-mayor-of-sofia](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/10/13/798858_right-wingers-to-back-CEDBs-fandukova-to-be-mayor-of-sofia)



## Joint practical policies – non democratic measures for strengthening of democracy?

The support that CEDB gets from *Ataka* in the Parliament proved to be of imminent importance for the one crucial pre-electoral promise of CEDB – curbing the corruption and bad practice and crime fighting. Of course, *Ataka* has supported the CEDB's methods. Due to the *Ataka*'s formal devotion for the radical confrontation with the organized criminal and previous political elites, it was relatively easy for Borisov to get this party's support for much more restrictive procedures and legislative initiatives which should allow police, judiciary and secret services to have much more powers as a tool in increasing their effectiveness. New Minister of Interior, Cvetan Cvetanov, has shown much agility to commence these changes. He is justifying it with the need to allow re-access to EU funds, thus to undo the overall bad impression about the Bulgarian slow adaptation to the EU rules and regulations<sup>108</sup>. One of the first proclamations of the new Government was a public warning to the "corrupted" individuals of the former regime(s) that there is a clear intention for their prosecution. This approach was problematic due to the fact that it was not anticipated as a part of the overall reform, which would be based on systemic and democratic foundations. In other words, their struggle against criminal and corruption does not have enough democratic capacity, instead it is primarily based on wider powers of the state organs thus (unintentionally?) allowing the breaching of human rights and freedoms.

First important measure that caused increased public concern was adopting of the changes to the *Law on Electronic Communications*. According to this proposal, the police should have indefinite and unrestricted access to all of the data of internet and mobile telephony providers. Due to the combined pressure of the media and the civil society, as well as the BC representatives in the Parliament, the most disputed provisions were changed in January 2010<sup>109</sup>. These changes referred to redefining of the necessary conditions for applying such drastic measures. Shortly after, CEDB initiated the reform of the national intelligence service, by giving more authority to smaller and more mobile groups. These reforms were foreseen as the initial step in gaining more control over the service's actions. Shortly thereafter, the authorities commenced the actions against organised crime and corruption within the high echelons of the ex-governments colourfully named *Drski*, *Octopus*, *Pimps*, *The Impudents*, *Jellyfish* etc. Actions have resulted with several arrests and processing. Even the former Prime Minister Stanishev faced the possibility to be processed, because of his possible involvement in the case of

107 Alpha Research, opt.cit, <http://www.aresearch.org/bg/parties.html>

108 See Clive Leviev-Sawyer, "Bulgaria says former cabinet ministers to be indicted 'in next few days'", in Sofia Echo Online, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/09/03/778855\\_bulgaria-says-former-cabinet-ministers-to-be-indicted-in-next-few-days](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/09/03/778855_bulgaria-says-former-cabinet-ministers-to-be-indicted-in-next-few-days)

109 See Rene Beekman, "GERB proposals on electronic eavesdropping act", in Sofia Echo Online, January 26<sup>th</sup> 2010, [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/01/26/848150\\_CEDB-proposals-on-electronic-eavesdropping-act](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/01/26/848150_CEDB-proposals-on-electronic-eavesdropping-act)

missing documents from the national intelligence agency (SANS)<sup>110</sup>.

In accordance with the EU demands, Borisov's Government strives to undertake judicial reform, which would allow faster and more efficient processing of the suspects. The calls for this reform are present for few years now, due to the fact that the large portions of suspects are being freed because of the "hole" in procedure that cause unnecessary duration of the processes. The reform itself is packed within the changes and amendments to the Penal Procedure Code, heavily criticized by the representatives of the civil society and opposition<sup>111</sup>.

In addition, it is also planned to push the amendments to the Law on Judiciary in order to introduce special courts for processing cases of organised criminal and corruption within the state institutions<sup>112</sup>.

All of these measures have been silently supported by the EU and USA, which urge Bulgaria to solve its problems with organised crime and corruption. The USA Ambassador proved to be a fervent supporter of the Government's actions. He was even defending the Government in public, claiming that Bulgaria *is not a police state*<sup>113</sup>. The EU, on the other hand, has much more comprehensive approach. In its *Seventh Report on Progress in Bulgaria under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism* issued on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010, the European Commission recognized that certain progress has been made since the new Government came into power. It is particularly related to the new Penal Procedure Code, the new strategy for the reform of the judiciary and the increased number of indictments for organised crime<sup>114</sup>. However, the Commission has also listed a number of shortcomings related primarily to the reform of the judiciary which is still an obstacle for a successful fight against the organized crime and low impact of the law on the prevention of the conflicts of interests and slow implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy<sup>115</sup>. However, there were no comments about the potential "collateral damage" that could be produced by the government's behaviour.

It seems that for both the EU and the USA the results are more important than the process itself. For this reasons it was relatively easy to swallow even the participation of *Ataka* and the cost of their support in the parliament. Except the support for the disputable

110 See "Former prime minister Stanishev to face criminal charges", in Sofia Echo Online, July 8<sup>th</sup> 2010, [http://sofiaecho.com/2010/07/08/929618\\_former-prime-minister-stanishev-to-face-criminal-charges](http://sofiaecho.com/2010/07/08/929618_former-prime-minister-stanishev-to-face-criminal-charges) and "Bulgaria's former PM Stanishev faces formal charges over missing National Security files", in Sofia Echo Online, July 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 [http://sofiaecho.com/2010/07/14/932500\\_bulgarias-former-pm-stanishev-faces-formal-charges-over-missing-national-security-files](http://sofiaecho.com/2010/07/14/932500_bulgarias-former-pm-stanishev-faces-formal-charges-over-missing-national-security-files)

111 Critiques were related to the planned system of so-called "substitute lawyer"; re-introduction of the indefinite detention for the criminal activity suspects 4 years after it was abolished; Introduction of the so-called secret or "anonymous" witness who could be also a person from the police or the intelligence service

112 Petar Kostadinov, "Bulgaria will have special courts for serious crimes, Interior Minister says", in Sofia Echo Online, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/05/04/896444\\_bulgaria-will-have-special-courts-for-serious-crimes-interior-minister-says](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/05/04/896444_bulgaria-will-have-special-courts-for-serious-crimes-interior-minister-says)

113 "James Warlick: Bulgaria is not a police state", in Sofia Echo Online, July 27<sup>th</sup> 2010, [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/07/27/938263\\_james-warlick-bulgaria-is-not-a-police-state](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2010/07/27/938263_james-warlick-bulgaria-is-not-a-police-state)

114 European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Progress in Bulgaria under the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism*, Brussels, July 2010, p.4, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat\\_general/cvm/docs/com\\_2010\\_400\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/cvm/docs/com_2010_400_en.pdf)

115 European Commission, opt.cit, pp. 5-9



extension of powers for the police and intelligence service, *Ataka* also pushed for the policies that fall exclusively within their own discourse. One of the most important issues that *Ataka* pushed is their campaign against the short 10-minute news on Turkish language broadcasted during work days on the national television, proclaiming it for the breach of the constitution. According to the Bulgarian Constitution the only official language is Bulgarian. Therefore, it is obligatory to use Bulgarian language in all of the institutions that were founded and are funded by the Bulgarian state. *Ataka* sees news in Turkish as the concession that was to Ahmed Dogan due to his political influence. Quite unsuspected, Borisov has supported *Ataka's* initiative to hold a referendum on this issue. This move indeed provoked certain soft reactions in the European Parliament and Ankara<sup>116</sup>. On the other occasion, when Borisov's pro-European government was well established, *Ataka* called for the revision of the provisions of the Treaty of Neuilly<sup>117</sup>, thus the change of borders in the Balkans. On the other hand, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria has supported the Turkish European aspirations, at the beginning of October 2010<sup>118</sup>. Again, this move passed without any resistance coming from *Ataka*.

Infectiously or not *Ataka* has abandoned almost all of the elements of its discourse regarding the foreign policy except the anti-Turkish one. Its doubts on inner structure of the EU are not being mentioned. *Ataka's* vision of Bulgaria's orientation towards some other countries from the Arabic world, China, Russia obviously has lost its importance to the party, at the moment. Borisov's close relations with the USA ambassador Warlick did not cause any reaction from this party. Some moves like sending of the additional military corpses to Afghanistan<sup>119</sup> would usually provoke *Ataka* to organise public rallies and demonstrations, but now they have passed without any reaction. Borisov's questioning the South Stream and other contacts with Russians also did not provoke *Ataka* to protest.

## Conclusion

For Boyko Borisov and CEDB *Ataka* represents an acceptable partner for few reasons. Firstly, *Ataka* is a party that has no track record in Government. Therefore, they can give their full support to Borisov's intentions to prosecute all of the former governing elites suspected for corruption and malpractices. Secondly, parties and individuals that represent *the Blue Coalition* have lost power on 2001's parliamentary elections in one rather degrading way. With minority government Borisov avoided the

116 Petar Kostadinov, "European Parliament to debate Bulgaria's proposed referendum on Turkish", in Sofia Echo Online, December 27<sup>th</sup> 2009 [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/12/17/832018\\_european-parliament-to-debate-bulgarias-proposed-referendum-on-turkish-newscasts](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/12/17/832018_european-parliament-to-debate-bulgarias-proposed-referendum-on-turkish-newscasts)

117 "Европа вече не може да се прекроява", in Trud newspapers online, November 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=295287>

118 Plamen Yotinski, Veselin Zhelev, "Borisov supports Turkey's EU bid", in Waz.EUobserver, October 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, <http://waz.euobserver.com/887/30966>

119 "Bulgaria to send a 200 strong infantry reinforcement to Afghanistan", in Sofia Echo Online, August 18<sup>th</sup> 2010, [http://sofiaecho.com/2010/08/18/948140\\_bulgaria-to-send-a-200-strong-infantry-reinforcement-to-afghanistan](http://sofiaecho.com/2010/08/18/948140_bulgaria-to-send-a-200-strong-infantry-reinforcement-to-afghanistan)

potential spill over of the popular negative attitude towards the *Blue Coalition*. Thirdly, as much as the *Blue Coalition* is the natural partner for Borisov's CEDB, its political platform is composed of the set of firm principles and goals. *Ataka's* platform is much more adaptable, hence it is easier for CEDB to reach a compromise with this party than it would probably be with the *Blue Coalition*. Fourthly, the electorate of these two parties is not overlapping in the most cases – *Ataka* is mainly oriented towards the more extreme, protest voters, while Borisov targets primarily modest right wing voters.

With signing of the Memorandum, Siderov proved to be a pragmatic politician. In order to get its piece of influence on the Government, he has (temporarily) abandoned its most extreme policies. Still, *Ataka* and its leader remained cautious. From time to time they have been sending signals that resemble their behaviour in the previous period, just to keep its electorate mobile, like the petition for referendum against news in Turkish or Dimitar Stoyanov's statements about the double standards in the EU regarding the Roma population<sup>120</sup>. Still, their critique of the state's course in foreign policy has stalled. Quite suddenly, because of the need to keep the "MRF out of Government" justified the inconsistency with the previous period. *Ataka's* opposition to NATO, involvement of Bulgarian soldiers in Afghanistan, foreign military bases at the territory of Bulgaria etc. were sacrificed for more "down to earth" ends.

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## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEWS

#### Interview with Professor Momcil Badzakov, New Bulgarian University

21<sup>st</sup> April, 2008

**M. B.** - In the beginning I would like to say that the phenomenon of “Ataka” is connected with everything that was happening in Bulgaria from 2001. Before the year 2001, Bulgaria had a two party political model, which implies that only two basic political parties were present: former communist party, now reformed to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the United Democratic Forces (UDF), the main opposition party which was founded after the change of the political system in the country. The UDF was a main motor for the accession of Bulgaria to the NATO and the EU. The BSP was expressing socialist, left tendencies while the UDF expressed, especially after 1997 one rightist democratic alternative. After 1997 and the governments which were mainly led by the BSP, Bulgaria found itself in deep economic crisis. The crisis resulted in the change of the governing elite i.e. the UDF came to power. This government made a series of radical reforms, because of which, up to the year 2000, a significant part of Bulgarian citizens lost their belief in the UDF. Economic transition was extremely hard, especially those reforms which led towards the privatization of public enterprises. There were lots of problems which caused the deficit in effective imposing of reforms, with one specific characteristic of the privatization process - corruption. For example, the biggest scandal which was emphasized in the media was the creation of the media image – “Mr 10%” of Mr Alexander Boskov who was in charge of the privatization process. None of the accusations were proved, but these scandals made a certain image in the media about one corrupted government, the personification of which was the face of Mr Boskov. Scandals were predominantly connected with privatisation of such objects like BGA Balkan – Bulgarian aero company which was sold to a company from Israel, which was obviously a phantom company. This was probably the biggest scandal.

Now, we can find one very interesting moment which is directly connected to the appearance of populism in Bulgaria. For the first time after the changes a strong populist outburst in public opinion appeared. That does not mean that populism was not present

before at the Bulgarian political scene. The most significant is George Ganchev who was the leader of Bulgarian Business Bloc during the 1990s. But this party could not break the established two party model in Bulgaria. In my opinion this occurred because populism, at that moment, did not have suitable grounds.

**I.N.** – Was it also influenced by the high polarization between two leading blocks, in the sense of anti-communism versus communism?

**M.B** – In my opinion, this was not the case. I think that at that particular moment the platform of the populist was not realistic enough for the Bulgarian electorate. Simply, at the time, the Bulgarian political culture could not allow broader belief in these populist models, which brings to light Bulgarian social problems with populists’ thesis. Paradoxically, exactly at the moment when reforms started, and when economic situation in the country started rapidly to get better (according to the statistic data) populism showed up. There is a theoretical explanation for this, which we can find in the history of ideas, before all those of Alexis de Tocqueville when he explains how revolutions usually start. He said that revolutions do not start when the economic status of the population of one country is bad, but at the moment when situation is slowly improving. At these moments a certain kind of illusion, that everything could become much better in shorter period of time, is often present in the public opinion. At that particular moment the revolutionary sentiment appears. The same type of scheme appears with the phenomenon of populism. Simultaneously with the slow improvement of economic and social situation of the whole society a certain kind of non realistic positive expectations are born. People are expecting miracles to happen, in other words, they are expecting a leader which can make these miracles happen. In the case of Bulgaria, that type of leader appeared in 2001, personified in the former tsar of Bulgaria – Simeon II Saksoburggotski (Saxe-Coburg von Gotha). This was, in a sense, the first type of populism in Bulgaria. The programme of the Simeon II had some realistic moments, but as a whole it could be evaluated as a populist one. Not just because of the promises that the situation in the country will improve in 800 days, after which “honey and butter” will supposedly flow all around the country. So, at that moment the “factory of illusions” which was closed in the year 1997 was opened again, as it was described by former president of Bulgaria Peter Stoyanov.

Interesting point is that the basis of reform process of the country which was laid down by the UDF’s government in 1997 remained solid during the next government led by Simeon II. However, some changes were proposed. Among others there was the idea about peoples’ consent which was in practical matters marked by the return of the representatives of the former communist regime to power together with the intelligence service. Also, it was marked by the change of the course of foreign politics from the United States towards the European Union and also towards Russia. This course is most obvious nowadays with the new (current) president Georgi Parvanov, who obviously alleges for the parallel development of the relations with the EU and with Russia. The basis of the idea was the creation of the basis of neutrality within the frame of the EU. This could not simply be explained as populism. In fact, the basis of the first populism



in Bulgaria was related to the expectation that a lot of bad and negative characteristics of the country's social and economic development could be changed in a short period of time. But after promised 800 days this populism was demised, because it was clear that this change would not happen. Even the improvement of the economic situation was in fact the result of the former UDF's governance, because, as it is known, the effect of the economic reform cannot be felt immediately. First two years of the UDF's governance were marked with the solving of the state bankruptcy left by the BSP. For example, my payment before 1997 was 3 US dollars. Near the end of the UDF's government it was 110 US dollars.

Therefore, the end of the first populism in Bulgaria had opened the doors for the second and third wave of populism. Third wave was personified in the political party CEDB, which was a product of the first one, actually from the part of the political stream led by Simeon II. The media in the country gave birth to this third wave of populism. The media paid too much attention to the promises of the populist's. When it comes to the phenomenon of populism in Bulgaria, most of it could be described via influence of the media in the country. The same situation happened at the end of 2000 when the media led a campaign in favour of Simeon II for six months. For example, from October-November 2000 he was presented as an ideal leader of the country, somebody with whom the transition process will be much smoother and less painful. Simultaneously, the media was painting the government of the UDF in black by saying that they are "corrupted, bandits etc." The media was in fact presenting the "clean cheek" of the so-called Supermen, Batman, an ideal male from Balkans – Boyko Borisov (who was a part of Simeon's regime as the Secretary of the Ministry of Interior) after the downfall of the public belief in former tsar. But the second wave of populism led by „Ataka“ was not the product of the media.

**I.N.** – You have said that "Ataka" was not the product of the media. But which was the role of the cable television SKAT. Some are arguing that the root of the success of „Ataka“ on Parliamentary elections 2005 lies in the fact that this television directly supported „Ataka“ and Volen Siderov?

**M.B.** - Without a doubt, the role of the television SKAT cannot be put aside. That is a cable television broadcasted exactly in those areas where that second type of populism personified in "Ataka" had suitable grounds.

In the beginning, I would like to point to the social background of those parts of electorate to which the campaign of "Ataka" was directed. Firstly, those are the people who consider themselves as "transition losers". These people do not consider themselves responsible for their current status, and they are expecting the state to help them. Secondly, those are the people with unchanged communist illusions (no matter if they were not communists), for whom Todor Zivkov played a positive role in Bulgarian politics. And thirdly the rhetoric of "Ataka" was directed against the MRF and Bulgarian Turks as a whole, because it was clear that in the time of transition MRF was involved in the majority of the corruption activities. "Ataka" used the way in which MRF was founded, as an ethnic party (which is trying to represent them in the

media as all-Bulgarian liberal party). But the fact is that in reality MRF holds the votes of the Turkish ethnic minority, who are almost exclusively voting for the MRF simply because they do not have another choice. Therefore, in the areas which were under the dictatorship of the communist party, the dictatorship remained but the party changed. The party is now the MRF. In those areas ethnic Bulgarians are the minority, and they were the main force which accepted "Ataka" for their party, predominantly because of the anti Turkish rhetoric of this party.

**I.N.** – At the beginning of the transition, the MRF was a coalition partner of both BSP and UDF. Somewhere in 1991, I think, for the first time the question about the constitutional constraints about the ethnic parties was raised, there was the famous article 11, which bans the existence of any ethnic or religious political organisation. In that sense, did "Ataka" raise this question again almost 14 years after the UDF did it?

**M.B.** – The appearance of the MRF happened at one specific moment when then ruling Bulgarian communist party should have solved the problem which was created by the so-called "Revival process". The question of the return of the names to the Bulgarian Turks was raised. They were changed in 1984-1985 during the Todor Zivkov's regime. BSP as a successor of the communist party was obliged to solve this question, and, on one side, the law for returning the names to the Bulgarian Turks was made, but on the other the MRF was already created. In fact, the creation of the MRF was related to the communist intelligence service. Today it is not a secret that the majority of the MRF's MPs as well as the party's leadership were connected to the communist intelligence service. That can be proved with the opening of the archives. But that is not of a great importance. Much more important is that the MRF had a role to separate itself from the UDF. At that particular moment, Bulgarian Turks would have supported the UDF, if the MRF had become a part of this broad coalition. Also, the leaders of the BSP were not sure if they could win the elections. Therefore, they allowed the registration of the MRF as a political party, in order to prevent possible entrance of this party to the UDF.

In my opinion, the MRF had played a very important role at the beginning of transition, because it levelled down the possibility of ethnic tensions (but this is also the merit of Bulgarian parties). This created a specific Bulgarian model of ethnic joint life, where Bulgarians and Turks live together without any bigger problems. Problems happened at the moment when the government took actions towards the ethnic Turks. Ethnic Turks, mostly because of their religious constraints, are isolated and devoted to their leaders, before all religious ones but also to the political ones (like in the case of Ahmed Dogan). For example, when their leaders (mostly Imams) said that they should go to Turkey, they confined and the so-called "Great Excursion" followed. 300 000 – 350.000 of Bulgarian Turks fled from Bulgaria to Turkey. One half of them returned to Bulgaria and others stayed in Turkey.

The MRF is not a populist party, it has a serious liberal programme, but its electorate is very conservative. Probably it is the most conservative part of the whole electorate in Bulgaria. When we talk about "Ataka", it is clear that it had parasitized on anti-MRF

and anti-Turkish sentiment. We can see that the large numbers of "Ataka"'s electorate comes from the ethnically mixed regions of Bulgaria. However, large numbers are also coming from the big cities and urban areas. It is also not true that the most of the voters of "Ataka" do not have a proper education and that they are coming from the lower parts of the social strata. In fact, many of them hold regular university degree and have stable and secure jobs. So, if we bare these facts in mind we can say that this kind of populism appeared (alongside with the Bulgarian nationalism) as a consequence of all wars in which Bulgaria has participated. After these wars, as it was the case in the communist period, nationalism was discredited and replaced with a variant of internationalism (because of the full control of Bulgaria from the USSR). What is interesting is that "Ataka" parasites on a totally pro-Russian type of nationalism, which is anti western. "Ataka" sees the greatest danger for Bulgaria in Turkey, the USA and in West European states. Therefore that is a pro-Russian and anti-Western type of nationalism. On its political spectre, Bulgaria has another type of nationalism which is symbolized by the IMRO and which is pro-Western, pro-democratic and pro-Bulgarian. Suffice to say, completely Bulgarian and not related to the interests of Russia. While "Ataka", according to some, is connected to the work of the Russian embassy and Russian intelligence services here in Bulgaria. Financing of such a television and publishing of the daily newspaper<sup>121</sup> costs quite a sum of money and it is not clear from where "Ataka" finds the funding for them. One of the explanations is that this party is connected to certain circles in Russia which have an interest in supporting one anti-American party in Bulgaria.

To return again to the question why certain parts of electorate voted for "Ataka", it is more or less clear that those are the people who lost during the transition of the country. They have lost their own perspective and faith in themselves, but also in the role of the country in their lives. Usually they are mid-educated, which is the difference between them and the voters of CEDB. CEDB is, to say a third type of populism, also supported by the media. Their electorate is modest and non-extremist, but they also think that problems can be solved more quickly with the existence of one strong personality. That is a kind of utopia about the mighty hand which rules the state to preserve justice and order, in this case personified in Boyko Borisov. That was the image made by the media about the CEDB and its leader. Now the ruling coalition sees in CEDB the main opponent on the next elections. You can see how the media which is dependent on the governing elite already started to paint in black Mr. Borisov and his party. The party itself started to lose because they are just governing on the local level. That is the reason why party is gradually losing popularity, because in principle, in Bulgaria every party which composes significant part of ruling elite on the important political place (local-but major cities or state level) is losing its popularity after few months spent on power. This electoral corpus which supports Boyko Borisov is the ruminant of the voters of the UDF. Indeed, some parts of those extremist groups which participated in the protests in 1996-1997 against the BSP government now left for "Ataka", and before

121 Skat television and Ataka daily newspaper

they supported the UDF. Therefore, it is possible to say that "Ataka", together with the Movement of former tsar (NDSV) and now with the CEDB, constitutes one not absolutely democratic part of the Bulgarian right. With their appearance on the political scene the democratic right in Bulgaria was discredited and levelled to the two small political parties, the UDF and the DSB. And up to this moment it is not clear if they go independently to the next elections and will they manage to enter the parliament. Maybe, for some, that is exactly what they wanted.

To return to the phenomenon of "Ataka". We can see that its origins lay not only on the ideological, but also on the social-economic-political or indeed cultural-psychological factors which derived from different sources. Because of that "Ataka" lost the original force that had characterized it. Not only because the major Bulgarian media created a totally negative image of this party and of its leader, but also because this party was claiming its legitimacy from different sources. On one side we have those people who are the losers of transition, those who are feeling miserable, and those who believe in miracles of populism. On the other side we have people who are educated and stand much higher on the social ladder. In principle, the electorate of "Ataka" is not composed by the people who are totally poor. Indeed, there are some people of this profile, but it is mainly composed of the people who belong to the middle class according to Bulgarian standards. Although there is an image of Bulgarian social stratification as 5% of the rich and 95% of the totally poor, in reality is not like that. Sociological empirical research shows that there is a middle class which composes around 25% percent of the total population. Those 30% which in reality compose the social bottom, what is also interesting, usually have ethnic background different than a majority of population. Before all those are Roma people, than Bulgarians (but specific social strata – pensioners or inhabitants of small villages and towns) and after them Bulgarian Turks. So it is not true, as populists say, that more than 95% of people are totally poor. In fact from 1997 there was a gradual improvement of the economical situation in the country, and in my opinion, if these three waves of populism did not happen, the improvement of the economical situation in Bulgaria would be much faster, because the phenomenon of populism as a whole distracts the attention from the real economic problems in the country with invented and superficial problems, like Turkish danger or that there should be some great leader to change the situation with the magic wand.

**I.N.** - How would you explain that one party like "Ataka" which has far right roots, is presenting economic platform which is close to the far left parties' programmes? Main points of this platform are nationalisation, redistribution of wealth, social and health programme.

**M.B.** – I understand. In the documents presented by the party are moments like those and a lot of attention is given to them by the party's leaders. I told you before, the basis of the electorate of "Ataka" are the people who are disappointed in the process of transition, who are searching in the nationalist platform their political identity and who consider the period under the rule of Todor Zivkov as a good time, because then

they had lived much better than today. Because of that but also because of common (peoples) knowledge that privatization was unfair and not entirely legal (connected with corruption – without matter which was the governing elite the UDF, NDSV or BSP) and that the most of the scandals in one way or another is connected with the MRF is giving strength to the nationalist populism represented by "Ataka". "Ataka" is predominantly composed of the people who are connected to the communist ideology or were connected in the past with the communist intelligence service. They play this role to represent nationalization as an alternative to the privatization.

**I.N.** - Is it possible to say that "Ataka" is a leadership party and which is the role of Volen Siderov in it.

**M.B.** – Yes. It was not accidentally that phenomenon of "Ataka" was born on the emissions "Ataka" on the cable television SKAT. These emissions were conducted by Volen Siderov, charismatic leader. He cannot be connected with the leaders of fascist or communist type. I would say that he is a characteristic type of leaders that appeared in the post-communist societies. For me, the clearest example is the situation in nowadays Russia, where so-called National-Bolsheviks appeared. For me that is the characteristic of Volen Siderov, he is not a nationalist or fascist, simply he is a National-Bolshevik like Eduard Limonov and general Barkashov who are in radical extremist (to an extent even terrorist) groups which are profiting on far Russian chauvinism and nationalism, orthodox fundamentalism, anti-Americanism. I forgot to mention Vladimir Zirinovski who was one of the first who supported Volen Siderov. That is extreme left part of the Russia's political spectre which is sympathised by "Ataka". On the other hand, I think that "Ataka" is Bulgarian phenomenon which is not connected in whole with some Russian models, but there are some national communist moments which could be found in Russia and some other states which were the part of the former Soviet space. For example, if I compare "Ataka" with Romania Mare political party or with the Serbian Radical Party, it can be said that "Ataka" has some common elements with these two parties. But to repeat, Bulgarian nationalism is divided: from one side there is one pro-Russian personified in "Ataka" and on another one pro-Bulgarian and pro-Western personified in the IMRO and some other groups.

You have asked about the leader. In the Bulgarian political scene leader was always important. If we even look to the communist period, former communist party of Bulgaria was a leadership party by its essence.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something more about the role of other party's leaders?

**M.B.** – Leaders of "Ataka" are of the different origin. There are people who were connected during the previous period with the UDF. Pavel Shopov was the MP of the UDF and now he is one of the leading figures in "Ataka". Therefore, in this party are different people who are representing different streams. Those who are appearing on the SKAT television are also expressing different attitudes towards various issues. But we can say that the most important figure is the leader, and like in some other parties in Bulgaria, if the leader leaves the party, it either fragments or some new leader appears which makes totally new image of the party. Because of that I cannot give the right

mark about the present leaders of "Ataka", like Slavco Binev or Dimitar Stoyanov.

**I.N.** – What is the relation of "Ataka" towards Europe and European integrations? In their 20 principles is not expressed one totally anti-European attitude.

**M.B.** – Lately "Ataka" is profiting on the growing Euro scepticism, which is not simply against the EU. It is connected with all negative sides of the European integration, because the accession of Bulgaria to the EU did not manage to give all what was expected by the populist part of the electorate. By this I presume mainly the money which was supposed to come from the EU and to be redistributed among the society. But, as we know, that was also the idea of the governing coalition which also comprised some of the elements of populism in its rhetoric. Therefore, all of those not fulfilled expectations, but also the implementation all of those norms which are expected by the EU are giving birth to the anti-European reaction in the primitive populist popular knowledge. We should not forget that in Bulgaria there is a low type of democratic political culture and that significant parts of the Bulgarian electorate are politically illiterate. This is a characteristic of all the states in the post-communist transition, but Bulgarian case is specific, since this phenomenon is also connected to the lowering of the educational level of the society during the last 20 years. Therefore, this lowering of educational and cultural level of the society as a whole must give some negative sentiments towards the European values and goals. "Ataka" bases its rhetoric not against the EU but against some particular parts that signify it, like the growing bureaucracy of the EU or those parts of it which, for example, do not allow the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bloc of the Koslodui Nuclear Power Plant or those who are not recognizing the Armenian genocide<sup>122</sup>. These questions are of the imminent importance for the leadership of "Ataka". From this aspect, it is possible to see that "Ataka" is not simply against the EU but against the basic European democratic values, which in their rhetoric are represented as completely opposite to the only Bulgarian national values which are based in the Orthodox Christianity and Pan Slavic integration.

**I.N.** – Which are the allies of "Ataka" on the European level?

**M.B.** – That is interesting. "Ataka" has established the links with the European far right parties. But in practice "Ataka" at the same moment comprises the elements of the far left with the elements of the far right party. However, the leaders of "Ataka" are denying that "Ataka" is leftist or rightist; they claim that it is in the centre. Although it is far from a democratic political centre, I think that this self-image of "Ataka" is truthful. Nevertheless, I think it should be positioned on the far left and not on the far right as it was positioned in the parliament in the beginning.



## Interview with Vladimir Shopov, former employee of the Agency for Social and Market Research *Alpha Research* and founder of the Agency *Sophia Analytica*

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V.S. – Understanding of "Ataka" should be related to the actual timing of the implementation of the two distinct transition projects in the country. "Ataka" came after tendencies to implement these two projects. One was quite difficult and it was a post-communist attempt, which happened through the implementation of the idea of gradual transition. The communists, now reformed to the BSP, expressed their opinion that the price of transition does not necessarily have to be heavy. There are many reasons for it, and some of them are clearly strategic because they were the party that was always in control of the initial stages of transition, so it really made sense to do the things in that way. From this point of view, it was quite logical for them to adopt this type of approach. On the other hand, in that period most of the people were worried about the future. There was an idea of a shock therapy, and you can find in the early programmes of the BSP and the UDF that they imagined the transition to be a gradual process. Gradual transition was a very popular notion that somehow we can get to the next stage, whatever the next stage was supposed to be, without undergoing a dramatic change. Many people could explain this through the national psychology that Bulgarians are always reluctant to make sudden changes in the way that they live, and this is probably true. So the gradual approach was adopted and a lot of economy remained state dominated, some things were privatized but the majority of the state's economy remained where it was. This notion went bankrupt in 1996-1997 during the great economic crisis, when it became clear that you cannot fool yourself and have an approach towards the market economy without really changing the key structures in economy. The economic crisis was the outcome, and this project went bankrupt. We can have a dispute whether there was a radical shift in the public opinion. However, it was very clear that there was a mandate for a new government, a quick change was necessary regardless if the people realized what was to happen. In fact, the citizens knew that this was the way forward, but on the other hand, they did not understand the implications of it. Therefore, the second project of transition started, led by the UDF and the Prime Minister Ivan Kostov. However, the second project was coherent and it has enjoyed quite a lot of public support, at least at the rhetorical dimension. In the context of "Ataka" this is important, because the beginning of the second project of transition was the last sight where the citizens have deposited their hopes for the better future. Nevertheless, they thought that it would not change the way in which they lived day by day. They wanted to get all the good things from joining the Europe and the West, but without paying the price for that. At the end of the 1990s, the reforms that the

UDF government was implementing dramatically and drastically changed the way in which people lived. State enterprises, which were practically bankrupted, were allowed to go down, and some of them were privatized by the management of the company. In addition, lots of these were sold on the market for a very low price. Moreover, the changes happened inside the public services, because of the transition, but also because of the ideological reasons that the UDF had, like health care and others. Therefore, the free services of the socialism were practically dismantled over the time between 1997 and 2001. The dramatic change happened in the way that Bulgarians lived day by day, over this very short period. Of course, the UDF had to pay a tremendous price for this. There were also some corruption scandals. The whole process of privatization at the time was interpreted as unjust, so a lot of conspiracy theories appeared in the public. There were a couple of plots. One plot was the rich versus the poor. The other, to an extent – communist versus anti-communist, but this one was not as obvious as the first one. More importantly, the process of privatization introduced the third plot which was linked to the emergence of "Ataka", and that is the *foreign dimension* or in other words foreign versus national. It is not just about the privatization process. Suddenly Bulgaria was thrown into the global economy, and people did not realize it. Many political and economic agendas were perceived purely through the framework of the nation state. People thought that we just need to adopt the praxis of the Germans, or French, in for example health care system, but still in the nation state context. People were not speaking in these terms but these were on their minds. They were simply rejoining Europe in their minds, and they suddenly realized that they have joined the world. It is not the same thing, and it is much more difficult and much more challenging. Suddenly it seemed that the whole thing was out of control. It was not just about the EU, but there was the IMF etc. People were not ready and the feeling of uncertainty emerged with the beginning of the new millennium. The phenomenon of "Ataka" was to a great extent a response to that. To cut the story short, I think that in 2001 it was clear that the transition process did not produce the types of outcomes people were expecting. So they started to question the whole transition, "why did we bother with this thing?"; "What did we get?", "We have general day to day insecurity". The electoral body of Bulgaria is specific, and since the 1990s it is important to take into consideration (old age heavy people, emigration of the young to the Western Europe and the USA). I think that "Ataka" was a response to this kind of feelings, that whole transition process produced a small group of people able to play that kind of a game. And the majority of Bulgarians do not know how to go on with this thing and how to survive in this totally new world. Many things were interpreted, in the public, as betrayal of the promises of transition. I think that this was a political context of the phenomenon – the emergence of "Ataka".

I.N. – You have marked 2001 as a border year, but "Ataka" emerged in the 2005. The new government was made by the NMSS and the MRF. "Ataka" had built their support on the critique of the functioning of this government, and especially the participation of the MRF in it. Can you tell me something about this?

**V.S.** - I will first say a couple of things about the language of “Ataka”. The language of the prime minister at the time when the idea of “Ataka” was forged, Simeon Sakskoburgotski, was irrespective political language. If you read his public statements, you will realize that he was constantly trying to present himself as a political entity, as he was the Prime Minister by default. You could get a feeling that for him politics and everything connected with it was a ridiculous game, and that his real position should be the one of a king. He had the lack of clear ideas and policies. That combined with the signing of the treaty was the point when many Bulgarians said ok that was it. That feeling unlocked the energy about which I was talking. This is a characteristic of Bulgaria, because the EU accession and the transition overlapped, mainly because the first transition project was so reluctant to engage in reform. A lot of reforms and the accession process were done in the same time, and that was quite unique. Anyway, the signing of the EU accession treaty symbolised, for the people, the end of the game. It completely unlocked this sort of political language. Correctness that was predominant in the country. This is why, to a large extent, “Ataka” emerged as this phenomenon. It almost went undetected, and it is not a coincidence that it was done by the media – SKAT television. There are many conspiracy theories about “Ataka”, for example, that it was founded by the communist generals, or Russians. There is some evidence that there is probably some Russian money in it.

SKAT television is a cable network channel, and it was the first channel that basically began to speak out of the political correctness. It opened up and offered a place where you can discuss the issues which were ignored by the mainstream media to a large extent. The mainstream media were reproducing, in some shape and form, the agendas of the government. They were explaining what is happening in a language, which was quite tolerant towards these agendas. On SKAT the masks were off, you could say what ever you wanted. The format of SKAT was such that it operated trough a four-hour phone-in programme. They opened the phone line and people could say what ever they wanted. So the SKAT itself could not be blamed for what people were saying. The body, which was controlling the work of the electronic media, did not do anything. They had not been doing it, because the regulation in this area practically did not exist. When I say regulations, I mean compliance with the legal provisions. For example, you cannot have alcohol commercial after 10 o’ clock and the channels regularly break this rule. When the SKAT television appeared the Council for the electronic media did not have legitimacy to react, because they did not do it on numerous occasions before. They left it as it was. This type of programme is still very popular. At this moment there are at least 6 or 7 cable channels which are broadcasting it, since this type of programme is very cheap to produce.

The part of the broadcast on the SKAT television, which was related to the emergence of “Ataka”, was a show with Volen Siderov, broadcasted on a daily bases, raising issues which were very often avoided by the mainstream media. It was mainly cantered on corruption, for example, on what was happening in customs etc. He was a journalist so he had a capacity to recognize a good story and he had sources in different

places so he could pick up the story relatively easy. It was precisely a sort of programme where you could feed on and reproduce these perceptions of the stolen transition. For example, he would take a privatization deal, which was concluded between 1998 and 2002, and he was looking at it from different aspects. He used to criticise the way in which this deal was signed, he got in contact with losing sides, people who were trying to buy this company unsuccessfully. There was a problem with the post privatization control in this country. There was a separate agency which was supposed to look for the compliance of privatization; in terms what happened after the company was privatized. This agency has done almost nothing. Therefore, he would get a contract and then look for the evidence on how and way this contract had not been fulfilled. He was constantly trying to dig out cases like that. There were stories like that also in the mainstream media, but there was no coherent narrative. My personal impression is that it was very ad-hoc selection of topics.

**I.N.** - Now we come to the issues which were transplanted from the show about “Ataka” to the programme of the party founded by Volen Siderov. Can you tell me something about that?

**V.S.** - The programme of “Ataka” is a mixture of the neo-communist programme, in economic terms mainly, since they proclaimed that they want nationalisation. Volen Siderov stopped talking about that which is interesting. They are trying to reconstruct this so-called “free rider” system of public services and state property. They are talking about it in different ways but this is the type of response that they are trying to evoke. Usually they choose their topics depending on the audience, and it is very curious that they talk about this aspect on one occasion and on another they talk about the other one. On the other hand, there is the nationalist agenda.

All these elements came out on the national elections 2005. I think that for the elections for the European Parliament it was a different mixture, they took out some bits from the *global vs. national* that came out quite clearly. And they instrumentalized that trough the accession process referring to the concessions that Bulgaria made during the accession like the closing of the reactors 3 and 4 of the Koslodui Nuclear Power Plant, agriculture quotas, to the very stiff standards that had to be implemented in the field of environment. I really do not know how I would label “Ataka” regarding these questions. It is quite easy to be Euro sceptic. Their electoral basis is composed mainly from the people that think that they would lose from the EU. Euro reluctance is the thing, which comes to my mind when I try to describe it. It is very difficult to think about their approach in policy tasks because they are not articulating precisely what is the thing that they want. Whole pattern of the debate during the campaign for the European elections was extremely basic. A lot of people voted for “Ataka” although they did not know, that much about the way in which the EU works. If you ask them why are they against the quota system, I really do not think that they would be able to answer.

**I.N.** – Shall we return to this nationalistic part of their programme? For the European elections they have put forward the anti-Turkish message. Also they have



outlined that they are not particularly interested in the EU as for the cooperation with the Russian Federation, China, Arabic world etc.

**V.S.** - This is why I keep making this distinction between the neo-communist and nationalist even xenophobic bits. Parts of the post-communist economic agenda, this idea that there is a lot to be gained, but also a lot to be lost. For example, the Russian market is the one that would be lost. This illustrates the "Ataka"'s way of thinking, that in some way you cannot do both. And every time the pro-European parties in Bulgaria talk about the EU market, the USA market, people on the left say "yes but what with this all wonderful markets that we have lost?" This link with the Arab countries is also part of this thought change, because Bulgaria was, aside of the Warsaw Pact countries and the Soviet Union very active in trade with the socialist Arab countries. The best example is Libya. I think that at one moment there were more Bulgarians working in Libya than in the Soviet Union. So the rhetoric of "Ataka" is based on agenda that these markets can be reclaimed. It is peculiar rhetorical game because, for example, if someone from "Ataka" listened to me now they would say that I am ideological. Because I am pro-European etc, and that is my ideology. But on the other hand they are saying that we have played on the EU card and that because of it we have lost the Russian market which is growing again.

**I.N.** – And what about the anti-Turkish rhetoric? They perceive Turkey and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria as the greatest peril to the existence of the Bulgarian state.

**A.S.**- About the anti-Turkish rhetoric, a lot could not be said until 4-5 years ago. Whole memory about the other Balkan wars was too fresh. People were really afraid that something terrible could happen like it happened in the former Yugoslavia. Also the memories about the changing of names of the Bulgarian Turks in the 1980s were quite fresh. Even today, if you ask the people on the street, they would tell you about the unique ethnic model of Bulgaria. I personally think that it is not working. These two things that I mentioned kept these emotions under the surface. People were reluctant to talk about the Ottoman period in a way that "Ataka" is talking about it. And it was not allowed to do it publicly, or even to construct the political party with its political identity around this thing. The other thing is the issue of the MRF. There are a lot of people who think that what "Ataka" is doing has been provoked by the MRF. The party like "Ataka" was necessary to create a new psychological rationale for the existence of the MRF. The MRF needs to be in Government to preserve its influence on the development of the economy in the parts of the country where the Turkish national minority is. Therefore, it is not just that they feed on corruption. However, if they lose their place in the Government they will lose a great deal of control over what is happening in the lives of these people. The perfect example is the tobacco subsidies. The MRF completely destroyed the tobacco industry simply to preserve the basic existence of the people in this part of the country. The biggest tobacco companies in Serbia were sold for three to four times more than the tobacco companies in Bulgaria. And when Simeon tried to sell the company, to break the tobacco monopoly, it almost broke down the government. It is not because the MRF was against the privatization

per se, they were against it because this was one of the most important ways in which they control the Turkish community. So this rhetoric of "Ataka" has to do with the way in which the MRF behaves in the government, and they are the party which has been in the government for the longest period. So without the MRF, as it is, a lot of these rhetoric would not hold. You know, I have a lot of information from the people that I know politicians and even my friends who come from the regions in the North East and they told me numerous stories about Bulgarians that had been pushed out from their jobs. They could not live in those parts of the country anymore. It is an issue that is not clearly cut out. It is clear what should be done in the future. The Turkish minority in these regions is in pre-modern economy. Somebody recently told me about the scheme in which the MRF is controlling the votes in these areas. And he told me about the person who on the election day refused to go and vote for the MRF and a part of his ear, because of that, was cut off. So this example illustrates that there are a lot of informal social mechanisms that are controlling these communities. One cannot escape from it. And I think that if that had not been the case "Ataka" would probably not succeed in it. "Ataka" is now more than an attitude, a product which is coherent and in the position to stay. It is a way of responding to the things which are happening in the world around us. Because of that it is very inconsistent and because of that it is changing all the time.

**I.N.** – There is one particularly interesting part of their document *Programme Scheme* where they express their opinion that the citizen alliances should be also allowed to attend the national elections. In other words, there is no need for such alliance to be a party? In that sense, are they questioning the roots of the political system?

**V.S.** -Very much of the initial talk was very anti-systemic; there is no question about that. However, until today it is really problematic to represent "Ataka" in a certain way because its rhetoric about various issues is changing all the time. My impression is that they are for more pro-direct democracy, with all the implications that it carries, some sort of anti-party, pro social movement. It is best illustrated by their demand for referendums on everything, for every issue in the state. Even now, they formulate questions for the possible referendums. Sometimes they put up certain questions for which you can vote, and then they put them on SKAT. Their approach is much more orientated towards the leader, which is combined with the direct connection with the people. Some people are convinced that somehow it is actually possible to elect someone who would represent them and that this person would know what the people want all the time. It is a way of putting the sideline agenda with the official one, and that is the agenda of the people – "No one asked us". In some sense that is true because we did not have referendums about the accession to the NATO and the EU, so it is very easy for "Ataka" to make this sort of claim. I personally think that there should be a referendum, especially on the EU accession.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something about the leadership of "Ataka"? You have already told me some things about it, but what about the others?

**V.S.** - I can tell you. I have written an article for "Tema" on "Ataka" and I will forward it to you. There is two different ways of looking at "Ataka". One is to mock



it and the other is to over dramatize its importance and the threat that imposes on the political system. I am sort of in between of these two attitudes. A lot of people mock "Ataka", because it is very incoherent, it is sort of family based. The entire parliamentary group has disintegrated. Slavi Binev basically, he is not even worthy of a serious discussion. The man is a crook, and it is quite clear, probably a criminal as well. It is clear that he had bought his place in "Ataka". I do not have any other reasonable explanation for that. A lot of people had left "Ataka", and it is obvious that Volen Siderov has completely established the full control over the vain with which the state is subsidizing "Ataka".

There are actually a lot of former state security people in the parliamentary group of "Ataka", I do not know if you know that initial people that got elected, were not in "Ataka" but in the parties that had formed the coalition. And these people were there partly I think because of the neo-nationalist link. Because the state security was very much involved in the entire process of changing the names of the Turks. I presume that two diplomats were also involved in the entire name changing process. Volen Siderov was trying to get some of the legitimacy through this link. Some people say, and this is very computational, that these people could be a link between "Ataka" and some former communist generals. I really do not know. In terms of personalities, it is the man himself. He is also theatrical. That is clear. I have spoken to the MPs about the things that he does in the parliament. They all say that it is actually really funny because when they are in the Parliament and when they discuss issues, before the session, he is a perfectly normal human being and they talk to him in a normal way. They say that he is quite reasonable, but whenever a camera appears from somewhere, whenever they have to make a public statement he begins to act like he is on stage. I think that the whole thing is staged. In the beginning, it was clear that he was acting but now it is a publicly known act. It is quite sad, in a way, that a lot of opposition parties have been quite relaxed about working with "Ataka".. On the other hand, I do not think that there is much of cooperation with "Ataka" and the other parties in terms of policy substance. People were criticizing Kostov and the DSB because they supported the informal acceptance of "Ataka" as an official opposition party. A lot of people think that "Ataka" should be sidelined for some time. "Ataka" was very quickly included in this political opposition formats. It is a problem of the parties also. Very few of the parties have the party structure and the membership. The UDF, I do not know, probably they have around 20 000 members now. Many parties are national on paper, but in fact some of the so-called big parties do not have offices in God knows how many municipalities. "Ataka" is not like that, because of the energy that they are generating. Whenever the opposition wants to demonstrate, to do a march or something like that, they all have to rely on "Ataka". Because the UDF and the DSB voters are the people like me, who would not likely go out because they are busy. They have families. A lot of "Ataka"'s supporters are quite old, unemployed or probably have a job in the lower services. They are angry. "Ataka" could probably gather 10 000 people every other week if they wanted to do that.

Suma summarum, there is not much cooperation, but, for example, on votes for non-confidence when the opposition needs every single vote "Ataka" is constantly included.

Now, what is interesting is that if the current situation holds, there will be only four parties in the next parliament: BSP, MRF, CEDB and "Ataka". The most likely coalition after the next elections is the one between CEDB and "Ataka", so God knows how this party would look in the Government. They are not under the pressure to create policy ideas.

**I.N.** - At the local elections 2007 "Ataka" probably entered the local Councils of some of the Municipalities. I am interested about the results that "Ataka" achieved in the municipalities where the Turks are the majority?

**V.S.** - The local level is completely different from the National one. I do not remember if "Ataka" got any mayors but they have certainly formed coalitions on the local level. These coalitions are of all sorts, CEDB and others, I think even with the BSP. It is completely different agenda than at the national level. In the municipalities where the Turks are the majority or at least large minority, the votes of the ethnic Bulgarians were predominantly divided between the BSP and "Ataka". Because the active and educated people had already left these parts of the country. "Ataka" is much stronger in the smaller towns. But when you have a strong MRF the Bulgarian vote is split between the BSP and "Ataka". The right wing parties are almost non-existent in these areas.

**I.N.** - How do you see "Ataka" on the ideological scale? Some scholars say that "Ataka" is the extreme left party, others that is the extreme right.

**V.S.** - For me it is not possible to identify them on this continuum. If I had to identify them, I would say that they are simply anti-regime party, not an anti-system party. A lot of it is a patchwork. Many things that they say economically can be classified as extreme left, a lot of ethical presumptions of "Ataka" are extreme left. However, at the same time they have adopted sort of a quasi xenophobic which is clearly the extreme right and very sceptical to the emigration onwards. If you look at the labour market, there is a huge shortage of labour. 20% of the Bulgarian companies are saying that currently they are unable to find the people that they need on the Bulgarian labour market. Now we have a debate about what to do. Probably we will have to import the people, the workers. And as soon this process begins to happen, "Ataka" will probably develop in this direction; this vector of their identity will become probably more prominent than the economic one. I say anti-Regime because it is probably more convenient, because it is clearly not anti-systemic any more. It depends on the state's subsidies. They want to change some bits of the Constitution, but even the anti-systemic rhetoric, to an extent, is gone. When I say anti-Regime I presume sort of a construction of economic and political policies that prevail in this time.

I think that "Ataka" will stay, and probably it will even expand over the years. If you ask the members of "Ataka" why they are dissatisfied you will find that they are primarily like that because their hopes and expectations were not fulfilled, probably

because these hopes and expectations were unrealistic. It is a cognitive problem as well, because this country was to, a great extent, culturally isolated during communism. People in this country are generally puzzled cognitively by what is happening to the world. They are not really able to find the way in which they should conduct their daily lives. They are in the constant state of uncertainty, agitation. They do not have right mental tools to understand what is happening. Then it becomes very easy to have very inflated hopes and aspirations that were materialized, for example, with the emergence of the former king.

## Interview with Anton Sirakov, deputy -president of the political party “Ataka”

**23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2007**

**I.N.** – Political party “Ataka” was founded in 2005. Can you tell me something more about its origins and the founding of the party?

**A.S.** - The origins of the political party “Ataka” are related to the show “Ataka” on the SKAT television led by Volen Siderov. Volen Siderov was always one of the main political journalists in Bulgaria. The man who did not change his principles, and from 1989 up to now he has been promoting and protecting them in every possible way. The culmination of his activities was in the mid 2003, I think in June, when on the SKAT TV he started to host a commentary show called “Ataka”. As a reaction to these “lectures”, many letters from the viewers arrived, there were also many phone calls and e-mails from Bulgarians from all over the country and from the Diaspora as well. Most of them were bitter about the way in which Government led by Simeon Saksoburgotski led the country, he came to power promising many things such as “800 days”. It became clear to us how naïve we were to trust him. Exactly at that moment the idea to transform “Ataka”, from one media project to a political force, came to life. It was supposed to be a representative of the people who could not recognize their protectors among the political elite of Bulgaria.

The party was officially founded on April 17, 2005. It was not possible to establish it earlier because of the technical reasons. Namely, the provisions for the registration of the parties are like that that if we had done it faster, probably the administration would return us to the beginning. That was because of the Law on Political Parties, which came to power at April 1<sup>st</sup> that year. When the law came to power, we have immediately taken the measures to register the party. We managed to do it, as you can see in less than a month, not just because it was a bureaucratic matter but also because it was fulfilling the wishes of the citizens of Bulgaria.

**I.N.** – But on the parliamentary elections of 2005, “Ataka” went as a coalition and not as a party?

**A.S.** - That happened because we did not have, at that moment, the Registration approval from the Court. Because of that, we found the way to go to the elections, just to fulfil state provisions, as a coalition of a few relatively unknown non-parliamentary parties: the first was the Bulgarian National Patriotic Party led by Petar Manolov, and the second was the National Movement for Salvation of the Fatherland led by Ilija Kirov. They were not very popular, but they had regular Registration approval from the Court. They were registered before that “dead” period during which the former Law on Political Parties was not in power, and the new did not come to power. Because of that, we decided to go to the elections in the form of coalition. Understandably, the coalition

was named "Ataka", because it was obvious that popularity of the idea was high among the citizens as well as the personal charisma of Volen Siderov. Therefore, the president of the coalition and its main representative was Volen Siderov.

At those elections "Ataka" got 8.2% or 21 of 240 MPs.

**I.N.** – What happened during those first days that the "Ataka" spent in the Parliament?

**A.S.** - "Ataka" was one undesirable factor in the Parliament for the ruling elite, because before that, a certain scheme of parliamentary life was present. There was a ruling coalition, there was an opposition, but they had a common opinion when it came to the key questions, and that was not just about the increase of the MP's payments. The best example is the question about the accession of Bulgaria to the EU. Here I would like to put this clear, "Ataka" is not against the EU in principle, but "Ataka" is for a different kind of EU, as an alliance of the sovereign states. Therefore, at the moment when "Ataka" became a parliamentary force, all other political parties had turned against it, both the ruling majority and the formal opposition. They started with attempts to manipulate our MPs in every possible way. First case was with Petar Manolov, who was enticed with the promises, as he later explained, to develop the party of which he was the leader. The consequence was that they had left the parliamentary group of "Ataka". Other four MPs, who were not the members of "Ataka" but members of the coalition, were expelled from the group because they openly renounced the politics of the coalition and they had voted for the establishment of the new Government. Three years later, we saw that this Government was working against the interest of Bulgaria. One of the members of the parliamentary group, who was loyal to the principles of "Ataka", until now, left the group on his personal request. He was accused of paedophilia. It seems that he has everything on his side, and it seems that he will be realised from the charges on the second court because the witnesses of the crime, at the higher court, admitted that they did not see him and that they did not have any contact with him but they were forced by the organs of the court to witness like that. I cannot say nothing more about it, before the official procedure before the court is finished. However, we can draw one conclusion that the witnesses were terrified, but in the situation where they felt secure enough they admitted that they were forced to act in the way they did.

Therefore, at this moment the parliamentary group "Ataka" has 12 MPs

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something more about the presidential elections 2006 when Volen Siderov entered the second turn of elections, with the current president of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov?

**A.S.** - At those elections, "Ataka" has shown for the second time that people believe in it, and that is why they should be confident in its politics. The first round of elections was held on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2006, and the second round on 14<sup>th</sup> November same year. I am mentioning these dates because more than half a year before that "Ataka" suffered one dishonest manipulation – the so-called case of "Trace highway". That was just one police provocation. Despite all that, you can see that Volen Siderov, in just a year and a half of acting actively on the political scene of Bulgaria, left beside him all

other pretenders for the post of the president. In reality, he took one very important place. Yes, according to the official results that is the second place. That is in between one quarter and one third of votes that the current president Parvanov got. What can we say about the way in which Parvanov got this number of votes? Firstly, the elections were held during the Ramadan and a large number of people who are called Bulgarian Turks and are living in the Republic of Turkey came in order to vote for Parvanov. They kept their Bulgarian citizenship to come during the elections. These people were, by doing this, putting themselves in danger for various reasons. They could have lost their jobs or even be deported to the Kurdish regions, which are in the permanent state of war, since as you know the army in the Republic of Turkey is still not professional. We all know how these people vote.

Secondly, we should not forget political influence of the other parties in the election committees. We had around one representative, but not everywhere, in every committee, but anyhow they had the majority in every committee. Thirdly, we should not forget that the new kind of glass ballots were introduced, so people were afraid that somebody could see how they voted. Fourthly, we should not forget, and I am ashamed as a Bulgarian to say that some of the votes were bought, this is a fact and everybody is trying to deny that it was happening. Nobody fights effectively against this matter. In the miserable situation in which the majority of Bulgarian people are, a significant number of them would vote for somebody in a way that I would like to illustrate in following example: Two men were talking just after the elections "For whom did you vote?" –asked one voter, "I voted for 100 leva" replied the other one. It is sad but it is a fact. In the end, we cannot forget one other thing, all the leaders of other political forces called their voters to vote against "Ataka" and Volen Siderov, in other words for Georgi Parvanov. For one president who is gravitating to one left orientated party. He was before the president of the BSP. When he became the president of the Republic of Bulgaria, he was obliged to the leftist party due to the constitutional provisions, which do not allow the acting president to be a member of the leadership of one party. He is a product of a leftist party, but the leaders of the rightist parties called their voters to vote for him, among which were the UDF and especially the DSB and its leader Ivan Kostov. He was one of the strongest opponents of the politics of the BSP and president Parvanov. And on the personal sphere that is the truth – Ivan Kostov is a man of spirit, and a professional type of politician. However, Georgi Parvanov is not a man of spirit and he does not give credit to professionalism, but Ivan Kostov said, "With disgust I called my voters to vote for Parvanov" – just like that, with disgust, but for Parvanov! Everything is clear.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something about some key moments in your parliamentary activity?

**A.S.** - I can tell you, without modesty, that I was the author of a few law projects in the parliament, and with some I was present as a consultant since I am a lawyer. "Ataka" has on one side proposal of crucial changes in the existing laws, but also the projects for totally new laws. Of course, they were not accepted, simply because they would touch



the interest of the ruling majority but also of the formal opposition in the parliament. I shall give you an example, the so-called law on "Nationalisation", which of course is not foreseeing the communist way of economic rule. That was the law which purpose was the revision of all subjects that were privatised since the transition of the country started. The intention was to see which privatisations were strictly following the law on privatization and where that was not the practice. To see which of the investors had fulfilled their obligations which derive from the law and the contract on privatization of the subject. For example: to see whether they paid certain amount of money to the state budget, if they kept the working power, if they kept the production of the company, if they did not keep the quality of production and therefore provoked the closing of the enterprise, if they had allowed the selling of the equipment of the company, in fact all of the provisions that were foreseen by the Contract on privatization that they had signed. Nobody wanted to support this law, because the persons from the present and former bureaucracy had lucre from these privatizations, this also goes for the higher echelons of the governing elite who participated in the privatisation as members of the boards of the companies to be privatized. There is also a question why the state itself did not try to help the weakened enterprises and then sell them for a higher price. However, they preferred to sell it for nothing. Now I will give you a fresh example – Kremikovci. One enterprise that even with just one part of its capacities in production gives around 2% of the Bulgaria's GDP. However, as you can see, the state did not prefer to take it literary without money because the obligations towards Mital were almost the same amount that was brought into company. Instead of that, the state is searching for other buyers. If it has to sell it, it should be sold for real money and not for funny sums like 1 US dollar. For that sum of money Mital had bought the biggest metallurgy company on Balkans. Yes, there could be ineffective areas of production, this company works for more than 40 years, and of course there could be a need to renew parts of the equipment. But this is a company which can work with the high capacity, it has place for the production, it has good position for the supplying with the raw material so there is a lot of interest connected to it. It is the fact that the value of its active was assessed to more than 1 billion US dollars, if not even in Euros at this moment. And again, we want to sell it for "yellow stotinki". Why? Because somebody wants to take his part of the money by selling the company in this way.. There could be a serious reason for this, somebody wants to prevent economic strengthening of Bulgaria.

**I.N.** – Now you have mentioned „Ataka“'s project of Nationalisation, as well as some cases of possible corruption. Can you relate it to your documents *20 Principles* and *Programme Scheme*.

**A.S.** - These are just the principles, expressed in the telegraphic manner. They were issued as a basis of one platform for elections. That is not of course the working programme, which we did not publish and I will tell you why. Some of the parts of that programme were adopted by other political forces. Simply because all of the governing parties, and I would like to mention that president Parvanov did what ever was possible to label "Ataka" as one xenophobic, racist and extremist organisation, which "Ataka"

certainly is not. Yes, we are nationalist organisation, but we do not see anything bad since we under nationalism presume protection of Bulgaria and Bulgarians. I do not believe that any of the serious politician would accept to deny interest of its state or to subordinate that interest to the interest of some other state or organisation.

**I.N.** – In your 20 principles I have founded around 4 thematic blocks: State building (rebuilding), Economy, Foreign Relations ... If you can say something more about these issues.

**A.S.** - We have a programme for rebuilding of the Bulgarian economy, such are the measures for protection of the Bulgarian producers. At this moment one paradox is present. When we talk about economy I mainly think of agriculture. Bulgaria is able to produce the amount of agricultural products which would satisfy the needs of the half of Europe, at this moment it is importing elementary agricultural products which are also produced in Bulgaria proper. However, in Bulgaria we are buying Turkish tomatoes, Greek potatoes, Macedonian apples (if I presume that Macedonia is formally a different state, but for me it is one Bulgarian province which at this moment has a status of an independent state). This state of things cannot be allowed anymore. The whole world takes the example of the only superpower in the world – the USA in almost all areas of statecraft, but we what we are forgetting is that the USA has a highly restrictive and protective economic policy, in order to protect its own production. We do not have that kind of protectionist policy, and "Ataka" demands to introduce it. A state which is forced only to import will exist for only a short time.

**I.N.-** In your document, the Programme scheme, there is a sentence saying that you want to introduce a kind of a protective regime for the Bulgarian economy until the moment when the standard of living of Bulgarian citizens is equal to the Central European one. Which states do you presume under this term?

**A.S.** – We are looking at these things in a mathematical manner. When we talk about the real incomes of the inhabitants, we are talking about the things that they can and cannot afford. This we presume under the term standard of living. But that is a changeable category, since we cannot relate it to one concrete state. We can take Hungary as an example, it would be great if Bulgaria could achieve its standard of living. However, you will have to agree with me that then an important circumstance would appear. The price of labour force in Bulgaria would not be so cheap. At this moment, one of the oldest countries in Europe and the World is treated as one far-east Asian province, where the investors are going to hire a cheap but qualified working power. We are the white slaves of Europe. We cannot allow this to happen any more.

**I.N.** - Can you tell me something more about your Social policy proposal? From some people I have heard that it is close to the socialist or even the communist one.

**A.S.** – Because of these reasons we are avoiding to identify ourselves as a leftist or a rightist party. Simply because of that, and that did not happen just yesterday, the understanding of left and right in contemporary European politics is not clear. You can see what happened in one state with the tradition of left and right parties like Germany. There is a so-called "Great Coalition" in power and it is working without any greater

problems. However, in Bulgaria the standard of living of the majority of population is horrible, and we cannot be adherents of one strictly rightist politics. We do not hide that we are for a better social policy. But that policy is not socialist one. The difference is in the relation towards the means of production, as Marx would say. "Ataka" never said that the whole economy should be in the hands of the state. Nevertheless, "Ataka" has always claimed that the state should have social functions: regulator, protector of order etc. It was always supporting a clearly separated Pension Fund. You can see that if you analyse the communist regime before the 1989, it did have some weaknesses but under that regime pensions were guaranteed. During that regime, we have been not equally rich but equally poor, we had guaranteed sources for existence. Garbage containers were not the source from which one should feed. During that period, people were not sleeping on the streets. Yes, apartments were quite modest in comparison to the West European ones. Nobody told us then that we should not have our own place to live. And that is told Bulgarians in present times, whose tradition is to have its own roof over his head.

For more than 18 years every government was talking about the separation of the Pension Fund. And every government tried to avoid the payment of social matters, before all pension payments. A significant part of population, in Bulgaria, consists of pensioners, and if they are forced to live just of their pensions, they are certainly damned to die. In that case they would have to choose between food and medicines. Not to tell you anything more, but even with help in many cases they cannot buy more. Pensions are not somebody's gift to pensioners. These people worked hard for years, and gave parts of their incomes in order to have some kind of security when they grow old. But now they do not have it. We have the surplus in our budget which is going waste. At the end of the last year one billion and a half of Bulgarian leva, from the budget, were used for everything but the pensions. Therefore that is just a game played with Bulgarians. Many of the political parties, before the elections, promise a free medical care and more, but that stays just a promise and they do not implement it in the state mechanism. I shall take one new party for example, which has not been until now parliamentary but their popularity is relatively high - CEDB. They are also for social acquisitions and also for free education, at least until the parliamentary elections. But they are asking for the overwhelming privatization of the country's enterprises and services. "Ataka", on the other hand, allows the existence of private hospitals. Let them exist, because they are for wealthy people, but we must also allow existence of the state funded hospitals. There are also people who cannot allow themselves to use services of the private hospitals, and they are 90% of the inhabitants of the state. Also, you can see that the biggest party in the governing coalition is the BSP. And the same government is now planning to privatize hospitals. And then where will the ill Bulgarians search for help? Then, we can even go back to the beginning of 1990s and the so-called plan "RAMT" when the American economists told us that Bulgarian population should not overcome 4 millions or 4 millions and a half. They told us that at that moment we were around 8 million and a half. What should have we done we the rest of the Bulgarians? Executed

them or left them to die from cold and hunger? Therefore, "Ataka" guarantees the free medical services and those who can pay for it they can do it if they want better service. The money in the health protection funds should be used strictly for that purpose. And we have the case that parts of it were given to the private hospitals, like it was the case with the minister of health Radoslav Gajdarski. He is one of owners of private hospitals (but not officially). There are also others like Atanas Shterev, who also participates in the governing coalition. And you can see that these parties promise everything before the elections, but in the end they are pushing law projects like that one which I have mentioned before. In practice they deny the right of health protection to the large parts of Bulgarian society. They are acting in the way to secure their own profit.

The question of the pension fund is fundamental. If there is no money, we can raise the same question that we have raised about the budget surplus for the golden reserves which are deposited in the foreign banks. And instead of taking the interest in it we are paying taxes for keeping it. You can imagine where that leads us. If one nationally responsible government comes to power in Bulgaria, it should remove these reserves from the foreign countries. Otherwise we will be dependant on the foreign countries, above all the USA. There is an example of Iraq. Saddam Hussein was launched and protected by the USA, but at the moment when he wanted to perform independent politics, the USA had frozen Iraq's monetary deposits. That was Iraq's money but it was in their banks.

**I.N.** – Now, can you tell me something more about your statecraft programme? There are provisions about the nation, ethnic minorities, protection of culture and language.

**A.S.** - I know the programme well because I was one of those who made it. Bulgaria is one nation state. Yes, there are people who consider themselves as part of other ethnos. We do not have anything against it, they have equal rights. But the major part of the inhabitants of Bulgaria are, without any doubt, Bulgarians. There are numerous examples about people who consider themselves as persons of different ethnical background, but still they consider themselves as Bulgarian citizens. Against that kind of people "Ataka" has no questions. Everyone who is ready to accept his or her duties as a Bulgarian citizen has all the privileges and rights which derive from it. In Bulgaria we cannot accept the existence of minorities, independently from the fact that the governing elite have signed the so-called Framework Convention on protection of National Minorities. For example, one Republic of France did not sign it. If you go to France you will see also people with different colours of skin from the majority of population, but their law recognises them as French. And then why should not I consider Bulgarian Muslims, who live at the Rodopi Mountains, Bulgarians, just because they preach another religion? We should not forget that that religion was imposed on their ancestors by force. I must say that for me personally religious beliefs are without imminent importance. Religion is something personal until one considers himself a citizen of the state and takes upon himself all the rights and duties that derive from the citizenship. If he does not feel as a citizen of Bulgaria, simply he can stay



here just as a guest. Bulgarian hospitality is a well known fact, but the guests should not forget that they are guests. But unfortunately there are some examples when they do forget. There is one party whose existence is in contradiction with the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria – the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. They say that their leaders do not consider themselves as Bulgarians. This party is always a part of the governing force, in one form or another. And the cause of that is simple. After 1990 the ambassador of the USA, and I think that that was Sol Polansky, said that the relation of the USA Government towards Bulgaria will be connected to the relation of the Bulgarian Government towards the MRF. William Montgomery who was his successor wished even the creation of the Macedonian party. We have not come there yet, but if we continue like this, we will eventually. I am also Macedonian by my origin. My grandfather lived in Bitola, at the time of Turkish yoke. But back then, it was considered a part of Bulgarian territory, and according to the San Stefano peace treaty of 1878, it was a part of the territories of liberated Bulgaria. I think that I know the wishes of real Macedonians, independently from the efforts to Greekization, Serbisation etc. So that is the truth about the relation of „Ataka“ towards the Bulgarian citizens, and about their rights and duties.

**I. N.** – You said that you do not have anything against different religious beliefs in Bulgaria. However, in your document, “20 principles” you claim that, in Bulgaria, one official religion should exist. In addition, in “Programme scheme”, you have expressed the idea that the new government (led by “Ataka”) should consult with the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church about all important questions.

**A. S.** - When we talk about the official religion, we presume the religion of the majority of population. I will return again to the example of continental Europe. You know that the leader of Huguenots and the founder of the Bourbon dynasty, Henry IV was a protestant. But he became Catholic in order to prevent destruction of France in civil war. And we know that in that time the majority of population of France were Catholics. We do not ask anybody to change his religious beliefs. But the major part of the Bulgarian population is preaching East Orthodox Christianity. Also, in the present Constitution is written that East Orthodox Christianity is the traditional religion. So it is acknowledged as such, even in this soft manner. But that does not mean that “Ataka” wants to prohibit other religions. We even suggested proclaiming official non working days for other religions. But we are for the East Orthodox Christianity to be officially recognized dominant religion, but that does not mean that all other religions which exist in Bulgaria should subordinate to it. The same thing is with the language. We do not deny the right to anyone to take an education and to speak in his or her own language. But Bulgaria is too small to be a dualist state, to allow two or three official languages. Official language, according to the present constitution is Bulgarian. But we can see that some are trying if not to change this provision then to surpass it. You can see that at this moment, the law project for education, where obligatory learning of the Bulgarian language is not foreseen is in the procedure. So, which language will we learn instead of that one? And we could see tomorrow that although Bulgarian is

the supreme language in the state somebody could say: “I do not know Bulgarian, and you are obligated to introduce my language as official, even in Bulgarian schools”. That can happen only in the states without tradition. For example, Belgium is also a small country. But there, nobody denies that it is populated by two separate ethnic groups, who have their different language systems. And these languages are official in neighbouring states. But in Bulgaria that cannot happen. We consider that this question about the language is not set just because the language itself. The real goal is the effect which was unfortunately achieved in the former Yugoslavia. Yes, it could be that SFR Yugoslavia was one artificial creation of different nations; different states which existed for centuries separately and simply they could not be summoned together in one place. But we were witnesses of destruction of the states which were unified. The freshest example is Kosovo. Now we can see the creation of three parts of Albanian state, which are on different places. Somebody has an interest not to prevent military conflicts on Balkans. Somebody has an interest to have territories under its direct rule, because Kosovo if it is not an independent state is the military basis of the USA.

**I. N.** – Since we came to that point, can you tell me something more about your idea for the foreign politics of Bulgaria, because that is a also part of your programme?

**A.S.** - I can claim that the programme of “Ataka” covers absolutely all areas of socio-political life. So you should not be surprised about programme views in all areas. In foreign policy we are for the equal cooperation with all of the states which recognize Bulgaria as a sovereign state. And vice versa we cannot accept double standards from nobody. Yes, Bulgaria is a small state, and also, which is really uncomfortable for me to admit, a weak state. And I cannot hide it; Bulgaria is also a poor state. Because of that, in one interstate alliance Bulgaria cannot expect equal treatment. But there are different levels of it. One thing is to have a partner, who recognizes our interests without forgetting its own. Other thing is to be happy of being an allied state with one state or bloc of states, which do not want even to consider Bulgarian interests. Here we come to the issue of the EU. I said before that “Ataka” is not against the EU, as economic and political community, if it is possible even a military community. Our opinion is that Bulgaria should be a part of one European community which could protect itself even in military matters, without dependency to the NATO alliance. There are states that are protecting their own interests even in different contents, like the USA does. At the same time, Turkey does the same thing. But, why that thing should not be allowed to the EU? So we came to the issue of existence of the EU in present time and present state. I am speaking about the equality. Yes, it is based on the principle of quotes. One small Bulgaria can expect small export quotes. We cannot export that much as countries like France or Germany, because we are smaller and poorer than these states. However, if we have to fulfil the conditions, and on the other hand we are being banned of the money which we should get from the EU funds – I cannot agree with that. We want to see equal opportunity to develop our own energetic system, and by it I presume also the nuclear energy. We accepted to close two blocks of the nuclear power plant Koslodui. But they are not satisfied even with out thermoelectric power



plants, since we should protect our environment. It is not under question, it is like that and it should be like that. But, we can see that the biggest superpower in the world, the USA never wanted to protect the environment and never wanted to accept the norms of its formal allies. You know that the USA did not accept to sign the Kyoto protocol. I cannot also accept the double standards in, for example, area of law. One Bulgarian can be, without any problems, processed in front of the USA courts, and in the majority of European states. Wonderful, it should be like that, because one should be under the trial in the country where the crime was committed. But one American citizen cannot be processed in Bulgaria. That is what I have in mind when I speak about the imperial politics. And we should not also forget that the USA did not want to sign the agreement for International Crime Tribunal. And with these two examples I would like to illustrate the relation of "Ataka", at this moment, towards the foreign policy of the USA. We do not want to say that a priori Bulgaria should have bad relations with the USA, but we cannot allow these cold-blooded irrespective relations towards the interests of Bulgaria by the USA. Therefore, if we want to have good relations with the USA they should radically change their politics towards Bulgaria. The same is our relation towards other states. We are not talking in that manner, for example, against Russia. That is because at this moment Russia is not that old Soviet Union, with high imperial potential like it was 20 years ago. When we were in the framework of the Soviet empire, they were acting toward us in relation master-servant. It is bad that the USA are acting toward us in the relation master-slave. We do not have absolutely any rights. That is what "Ataka" cannot accept. And I would like to underline again, not because that is the USA or some other state, everyone who would like to have relations with Bulgaria, those relations should be set at the equal level. It cannot be arithmetically equal because, as I have said before we are too small a state. But those relations should be measured in the same manner.

**I. N.** – We have, to an extent, touched the topic of the EU. Can you tell me more about your participation in the elections for the European Parliament, your EMPs, your politics and programme stipulations towards the EU? How do you see the future of the EU, as one purely economic community or alliance of sovereign states or even as one super-state?

**A.S.** - No. We do not want to accept the transformation of the EU to one super-state. Firstly, that is practically impossible. History had shown that big creations were made on various occasions but they did not last. Even the Roman Empire did not last 1000 years. At this moment you are in the area where the so-called Eastern Roman Empire existed. And that empire existed for more than 1000 years than its mother state. Which empire we are speaking about, if it fell apart on two separated parts? Ok, in order not to go any further, I shall make a point now. Simply, it is not possible to create a unified Europe, even if it is one super state. And that is not a need indeed. But Europe can be one union of sovereign states, where each of the members regards its own interest, and every state respects the interests of other members. We can help each other without blocking each other. It is normal for one union like the EU to have its

own defence system. Otherwise it will lose its own purpose of existence. If it is just an economic union, at the moment of slightest danger from outside, this union will cease to exist or it will work in accordance with the foreign wishes.

**I. N.** – On the official web site of "Ataka" is shown the election video clip of your party for the elections for the European Parliament. This clip was prohibited by the state's television channels. It is very colourful, with the images of the mosques on the central squares of London, Rome, and Paris etc. In the same moment, in your pre-election principles that one of your goals is the protection of the Christian values in the EU. Can you tell me something more about it?

**A.S.** – Yes. The goal of protection of the Christian values in the EU is in accordance with, before mentioned, goal to establish an official religion in Bulgaria. The majority of the European population is preaching Christianity. In the European framework we are not talking about the Eastern Orthodoxy. The majority of states in the Western Europe are Catholic. Formally or not those are Christian communities. It is normal that if the majority of population is Christian to give supremacy to the Christian values. Indeed they have proved their all-human importance. And there is not a case where the discrimination on the basis of religion is a part of these values. Never has the Christian religion preached killing of all other people who are not Christians. We Bulgarians have especially proved our religious tolerance in practice. I would like to speak about minarets. In practice, we have shown our tolerance towards the people who are preaching Islam. But we are against the expansion of the aggressive Islam in Europe, but only in one sense. That kind of expansion on religious basis has shown a tendency to materialise itself in separatist entities within the sovereign states. What was happening on the Balkan Peninsula in the last two decades, the same will happen in Europe. But this danger does not come from religion, but from the Turkish advance, which is using Islam for its own goals. Arabs are not conquering territories in that manner. They are not erecting mosques with the intention to say one day: "Oh you know, we have here our territorial community, so this part (for example Germany) should become a part of the Arabic Peninsula". You cannot find the representative of Iran who would say: "You know, we want one part of Europe to become a part of former Persia". And Turkey, as you can see has specialised in this. This is not only happening in Germany. I shall go back to the example of Kosovo. There they could not simply erect mosques, so they took different path to achieve their goal. They have destroyed Christian churches. There is Muslim, Albanian population. So they have expelled Serbs from their homes, and on that territory they have created Albanian enclave, so that is now an independent territory. The Turkish communities, in the United Kingdom and in Germany, are trying to do something similar, in the places where Turkish policy is to send more and more Turkish families. They are striving to preserve their separated identity and self sufficiency. They are asking to enter the globalized world and to integrate in it, but in the same time they are asking to separate from the others. We have similar examples in present Palestine, where one state was created with one act of the UN. The settlers who came there founded the new state of Israel and they claim that they are true and only

rightful inhabitants of it. And those who lived there for 1000 years should live with their heads bowed down or in the Israeli prisons.

**I.N.** - Now we can return to the politics of Bulgaria. In your "20 principles" you have outlined the principle called "Clean Hands". Why and what is the reason for that? Probably, you could say how do you see the governments of Bulgaria from 1990 until today, especially the governments of Simeon Saksoburgotski and Sergey Stanishev? And could you tell more about your cooperation with other parties at the Bulgarian political scene.

**A.S.** – I shall start with the last part of your question. From its birth "Ataka" has been suggesting a certain type of politics to all of the political options in Bulgaria, especially about those urgent matters which will help Bulgaria to progress. We do not have any limitations to cooperate with the others, if the goals of that cooperation are positive. We do not even have a demand for the official recognition that "Ataka" was the party which opened these questions. In other words, we do not ask recognition of copy rights. But from that cooperation I would like to exclude the MRF, one anti constitutional political party. And we do not want to legitimise them. But if they would like to support these goals (and I sincerely doubt that they would, because they were not founded to support the goals like these), we would even accept them. To say something about the corruption, we cannot level the corruption if the anti corruption legislature is not connected to the effective economic measures. The corruption is possible there where the poverty is present. There where one big and ineffective bureaucratic apparatus exists. "Ataka" is the party which proposed the reduction of the bureaucracy as an absolutely necessary precondition for solving the problem of corruption. It is not necessary to have that big state apparatus. Not just because they are paid for something that they do not do in reality, but also because they are creating obstacles for the others who wish to work. And that is the essence of the corruption practice – if you are dependent on me, on my position in the state hierarchy why should not I take the bribe from you although it was my duty and obligation to do that. And vice versa, if I am aware of the severe punishment that is awaiting me if I take the bribe, for certain I will think before I do something like that. We should be realistic. There are no such measures which could exterminate the corruption from the state apparatus, but of course we can reduce it to the smallest possible level. In order to do that, the idea of "Ataka" is to perform a radical reform of the judiciary system. In that, we are different from all other political parties, with some exceptions. If we are speaking about the economic basis of corruption, "Ataka" has one law project from which the ruling elite is terrified. That project is even called like that – *The law on depriving of illegally gained property*. The present law, which has existed since the former parliamentary assembly, the so-called "Petkanov" law supports the taking of the property just in the case when the law is broken. And in it, not all types of law-breaking were outlined. It may sound funny, but bribing is not listed as a punishable crime by that law. Plunder also. And we are talking simply about everything illegally gained. Secondly, our law project supports the effective depriving of the illegally gained property. If this law

project was adopted, we would not have the corruption on this level.

Now, I want to move to the other part of your question. You know, it is really hard for me to make a difference between the government of Simeon Saksoburgotski and present one led by Sergey Stanishev. The initials of both of them are S.S. Even there is no difference. To the two ruling parties of the first period joined the third one, and the methods of governance remained the same. The same goes for the proposed goals of the government. To tell you the truth, these goals were not set by them. Again we came back to the initials S.S. – Stefan Sofiansky. His temporary cabinet in 1997 set the basis for a lot of things – the start of negotiations with the EU, IMF etc. All of them swear that they are for the imposing of the Euro-Atlantic values. All of them wanted the NATO and the EU, independently from the propositions for that. Some of those propositions "Ataka" cannot accept. We cannot accept to be a member of one military bloc from whom we do not obtain security, and that bloc demands from Bulgaria to fulfil their obligations. That is why "Ataka" does not support the sending of the Bulgarian soldiers to the military missions where Bulgaria has no interest at all. What are our boys doing in Iraq or in Afghanistan, what are they doing, even in small numbers, at the territory of former Yugoslavia. Whose interest we are protecting there? We are giving a lot of money for these military missions, and in those regions our companies cannot work, since there are privileged companies from other states. For our mission in Iraq we have lost around three billion leva in 5 years. And that is not a pocket money. We have also lost the possibility to return one debt of Iraq to us, which is more or less with interest in the same range as the previous sum. All together we have lost 6 billion leva. I do not want to say that present government of Iraq did not want to return their debt. Simply they are not independent, and the alliance or should I say the USA and the UK had frozen their money. And we support those who caused the damage to our interests by sending our soldiers to Iraq. Where is our interest in Afghanistan? To become a part of the world's group for the drug trade. It is not a secret that that is the reason why the NATO armies are in Afghanistan. We can criticize Taliban regime for a lot of things, but the fact is that during their rule the drug production was exterminated. Before the Taliban regime, opium was the only product of Afghanistan. Now, they are exporting heroin, since the drug industry became more efficient.

To return to the governing coalition, it is governed by the people who are proud that they are not of Bulgarian origin. I will take the easiest example – Sergey Stanishev – mother Jewish, father Russian. Another problem is the citizenship. Until today we do not have an exact proof that Sergey Stanishev did not have double citizenship at the moment when he became the prime minister, since he was suspected to have the Russian citizenship. On the other hand, in 2001 Simeon Saksoburgotski had a dual citizenship – Bulgarian and Spaniard. Do you believe in fairytale that he could have lived in one state for 50 years without having a citizenship? And during that time he did not have a passport as a Bulgarian citizen. His personal documents, where it was stated that he is a Bulgarian citizen, were issued after 1990. It is true that he was never released from the Bulgarian citizenship, but what is also true is that he had



also the citizenship of Spain. Why he does not present his drivers licence issued by the Bulgarian officials? Why he does not present his credit cards to see upon which personal documents they were issued? Why does not he present his passport, to see how he was travelling? I would like to underline, that there is no problem if one is, by his blood, a descendant of other ethnic groups. Even in cases of Simeon and Ahmed Dogan it is not clear which blood they have. Nobody can tell. Dogan considers himself a Turk, but his mother is a Gipsy. Wonderful, I can accept that. Not many people know that there is a considerable number of Gypsies who are members of "Ataka", and they consider themselves as Gypsies and not as Roma. And it is the truth that they are that by their origin. They refused to be lied by the Gypsy barons like Cvetelin Kanchev. For example in Mihailovgrad, our president of the local board is a man of Gypsy origin. Both of his parents are gypsies, and they live in the Mahala. He is our activist who was not forced by anyone to become a member of the party, and also he did not have any real interest to join. We cannot help him, we are not in power. But the man saw where the truth is. He realized that all governments kept gypsies in unequal position. They allowed them not to pay the water, but also they did not give them jobs. They were not providing them with education. Completely the opposite. They tolerate gypsies when they do not send their children to school. They keep gypsies in ghettos. When there is one big community, gypsies do not integrate, let's be truthfully. If they are dispersed, in that case they accept integration, nevertheless, in most of the cases with mimicry.

We were talking about the foreign origin of the leaders of this country. Unfortunately it is not only them with that origin. I am underlining, that there is nothing wrong with their blood and their ethnic origin. The problem is that nobody of them thinks about the Bulgarian interests. Where are the kids of Simeon? They are not speaking Bulgarian. Now they talk about a small daughter, who might have an intention to settle in Bulgaria. But she did not even take the Bulgarian citizenship. She did not want to do that. Where are the kids of Ahmed Dogan? This thing with their kids is very indicative. It is very interesting to see where their real property is, and where (in which states) are they working.

I was a member of the party of Ivan Kostov at the time when he was not in power, the DSB. Under my initiative, in the programme of the party, it was written that the DSB is for the protection of the Bulgarian national interest. But that remained just a sentence, because Kostov after that made a pact with the Americans. There is one other sentence that the DSB is for the untied Europe, and we were not talking about the USA. The first thing that Kostov did is to go to the American embassy. Then we realised that we were double crossed, that that was just a try to double cross Bulgarians who were asking for more. That was the reason why "Ataka" was founded, that is a party which truly represents the Bulgarian national interest. To return to Ivan Kostov, I was talking about where the members of the governing elite send their kids. His children are, which is funny, in Italy. With enough resources which are allow them to sustain themselves. As a final result we brought the Unicredit Bank. Truly, that is a tragedy, but that is also the reality. And then, how should we believe that Kostov would care about what would

happen with Bulgaria itself. Now, instead of telling the public what he was doing, he is trying to leave, step by step, Bulgarian political scene.

**I.N.** – There is an opinion that "Ataka" is an antipode to the MRF?

**A.S.** - If that was true, that would mean that "Ataka" is also supporting somebody else's foreign policy, and not Bulgarian. They do not hide that their main goal is to support and conduct the Turkish foreign policy. Dogan once said cynically that the Bulgarian road to Europe is going through Bosphorus. It is a symbolical matter; Bosphorus is uniting two continents, Europe and Asia, and two parts of Turkey also. We would support the alliance with anyone with whom our national interests are protected. But also we would be strongly against any alliance which is endangering that same interest. Everyone would be disgusted of the alliance which determines the following type of relations: "I want to obey commands but I do not want to take anything in favour". If the MRF is protecting the foreign politics, I am protecting the Bulgarian interest. Maybe you have heard that the existence of "Ataka" causes the growth of the MRF. But it is quite the opposite. If someone openly conducts the politics in the country which he considers foreign, it is normal that someone else rises and defends that state from him.

**I.N.** – You were especially criticizing the MRF's way of dealing in the home affairs. You have accused them of corruption, for monopoly over certain parts of electorate. Can you tell me something more about it?

**A.S.** – It is not a question about the so-called Bulgarian Turks. I would not be mad if, for example in the Rodopi region, business was conducted by the local enterprises. But I would never agree if there were Bulgarian firms, but we support foreign firms to do that business. Especially the Turkish ones, and the MRF is doing that. Nobody has that kind of dumping policy against its own inhabitants - to take the workers from a foreign country and leave their own fellow citizens without work. And what about the works with the so-called sarais of Dogan? Here I would like to underline the difference between Dogan and Volen Siderov. In his presidential campaign Volen Siderov said that he does not need residency on Bojana, because that could be used for another purpose, for example orphanage. And we have the residence (sarai) of Dogan which could easily be an education centre. It is not fair that Bulgarian pupils win the gold medals at the Mathematics Olympiad and not have a place where they can learn and have practice. Because of that the people voted for Volen Siderov.

I apologize; we missed the topic about the elections for the European Parliament. We should not forget that these elections illustrate the growth of "Ataka". At the elections for the National Parliament we have taken 8,5%. At the elections for the European Parliament we took double of that, over 16% or 1/6 of the EMPs. Of 18 EMPs we have three.

**I.N.** – Question about the Bulgarian Turks and Bulgarian Roma people - the representatives of your party were very explicit when they spoke about the problems of Bulgarian Turks and Roma? Where is the problem?

**A.S.** - No, the problem exists with the MRF and Ahmed Dogan who was an open agent of the foreign intelligence service. When he admitted that he was an agent of the



Bulgarian intelligence service, he also admitted that he was a Turkish agent also (of MIT). And there is no doubt that he is conducting the politics of Ankara in Bulgaria. And of course, the politics of Turkey is helping the interests of the USA. So, we are not against those who consider themselves Bulgarian Turks, we are against the policy of the MRF! And that policy is also against the interest of the Bulgarian Turks. When we talk about the Gypsies and parties like Euro Roma, these parties are also anti-constitutional. The same role like the one of MRF. The MRF for example is not working to improve the educational and material standard in the region populated by the Bulgarian Turks. In these regions it is possible to build Mosques but it is not possible to build schools. They are not developing regional economy. Turkish firms are coming to work there and of course, they are bringing workers from the Republic of Turkey and not employing local population. They support the local production of tobacco and in the same time they have destroyed the Bulgartabac. That is a cynical way in which the MRF conducts its policy. With an exception of a few MRF's activists like Fidel Beev, Bulgarian Turks are in a miserable position.

When we talk about gypsies, the problem is with their party leaders. It is not a secret that the SKAT television and the party "Ataka" are connected. We are very grateful to the editorial board and to the owner of this television, because without their help we would not be able to find the tribune. It was not possible to spread our ideas, and we did that through the SKAT broadcast. Fine, this television, which is considered by the majority as xenophobic, is a unique television which has shows for Armenians and Gypsies (with the leading member of the Gypsy community). And why other media, which are not xenophobic, do not have a broadcast like this one. And of course, we have shows in the Turkish language on the Bulgarian National Television. We do not have anything against the Turks or those who consider themselves Bulgarian Turks. But we are strongly against the using of the language which is not national on the National Television. In the present constitution it is written that the official language in Bulgaria is Bulgarian, the language of the majority of population. That is the truth.

**I.N.** – Now, can you tell me something more about your cooperation with other parties from Europe? You have established the cooperation with the Jean Mary Le Pen, Jorg Heider and others.

**A.S.** - The questions about the cooperation and about unifying are the same. Those who also have the goals which are similar to ours can be our partners. We cannot say same goals, because these parties come from different states with different national interest. We could have a lot of differences with one nationalistic party from another state. I will give you an example - Romania Mare. If Romania Mare has an aspiration towards the Bulgarian territories in the Northern Dobruja, we could not be allies of that party nevertheless that that party is also a nationalist one. In that case our national interests are in collision. Or if that same party is against the existence of the Koslodui Nuclear Power Plant, the case would be the same. But they said that they do not support Greater Romania chauvinist politics and that they do not have any territorial aspirations towards Bulgaria. So we can cooperate, but on the general basis.

**I.N.** – On your web site it is stated that you along with other nationalist parties from the EU are in the process of making one supranational party on the European level, if I remember correctly the initial meeting was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> January this year.

**A.S.** – Yes, that idea existed, but it was not realised, and for now we are not talking about that party. There is one strong argument against the creation of such a party. We nationalists cannot be summoned in one International. So we cannot accept that the policy of one supranational party prohibits us from conducting of the policy which is defending our national interests. I would like to return again to our northern neighbour, because with France, for example, we do not have territorial contact. With Serbia we have a common border and I would be very happy if the Serbian Radical Party won the elections. But I would not like to participate in one supranational party in which the SRP and "Ataka" are equally obliged. Because the leadership of that kind of party could tell us –"You from "Ataka" will step down in favour of the interest of Serbs or Romanians".

**I. N.** - What had happen with your group in the European Parliament? Romania Mare decided to retreat from the group and because of that the group collapsed?

**A.S.** – We will continue to have a parliamentary group in the European Parliament, because that is a proposition of the Statute of the European Parliament. If you are not in the group but an independent EMP, you do not have the right for the judiciary initiative, or to participate in the various committees.

**I.N.** – Could you tell me something more about the scandal related to your EMP, Dimitar Stoyanov in the European Parliament?

**A.S.** - I think that a lot of people, who commented this event, had forgotten about few details. For me the ethnic background of Livia Laroca is not of that importance. If we want to be precise she is Jewish as much as she is a Gypsy. Her mother is Jewish and her father is a Gypsy, but that is not of imminent importance. For me that was not a scandal, but a comment of Dimitar Stoyanov. He evoked the spirits not because he mentioned that Jaroca has Gypsy origin, but because he said that if the members of European Parliament want to protect the interest of her kin people in Bulgaria they should think about the situation in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, wherever the gypsy communities are, they still obey their own traditions and not the laws of the country. The consequence is that you can literally buy Gypsy girls, and that is a fact which cannot be denied. In order to draw the attention of the public away from this painful truth, some accused Mr. Dimitrov for the insult and xenophobia. And he did not say that she is not pretty, he said simply that there are many beautiful gypsy girls. The point was also that he said that she should not be elected for the Miss of the Parliament just because she is of Gypsy origin.

**I.N.** – How do you see the future of "Ataka" and which are the possible partners on the Bulgarian political scene?

**A.S.** – "Ataka" is categorical, we would not change, because if we changed, we would lie to the people who trusted us at the last elections. I also do not believe that there is a man in "Ataka" who would accept to change our values as socks. Regarding

our eventual allies I could say this: the only thing that matters is if our partners would accept the most of our goals. If for example the UDF, DSB or CEDB or even the BSP say: yes we are ready as a socialist party to support some parts of your social programme, it would be impossible for us to cooperate with all of them. As far as the future government goes, we can speak about it only when the new parliamentary majority is formed, because in other case it would be just a wishful thinking. Why should we say with whom we would like to make the possible future Government if that party does not become parliamentary? For me personally, a lot of ideas of the DSB are interesting. How can I say that we will make the possible new government with them if Kostov stays at the head of this party, and for me is really hard to accept him. And what if the DSB does not enter the Parliament? And that goes for everyone. But I can say that if CEDB rejects its goal for privatization of everything, regardless of the method in which that would be done, why should we not cooperate with them. Regardless of the fact that I, and many others, do not like Boyko Borisov. But in that case personal dislikes should be put aside, in order to conduct policy which is supporting Bulgarian interests. If somebody asks from us to reject some of our principles and values, then definitely the cooperation would be impossible. One alliance asks for compromises, but that compromise cannot change the basis on which our party was built.

## Interview with professor Mihail Ivanov, New Bulgarian University

24<sup>th</sup> April, 2008

**M.I.** – The basis of the populism of “Ataka” is their anti-Turkish rhetoric. In their words, they are the protectors of Bulgarians from the threat of Turkish invasion. The MRF is the vehicle of the Turkish interests, so “Ataka” is playing with Bulgarian sentiments, since it is evoking the memories of the Ottoman Empire rule which lasted for five hundred years. They are establishing the link between the present and the past. That can be found in the writings and the statements of Volen Siderov. Besides that, Volen Siderov was also active on the anti-Semite basis. One of the strongest characteristics of this party is their relation towards the ethnic issues. If you analyse the statements of Volen Siderov, you will see that they are absolutely anti-Turkish. I am a member of one coalition “Citizens against speech of hatred”, which is composed of few dozens of NGOs and also some other individuals. We started with initiative to bring Volen Siderov before the Court because of his breaching of the Law against discrimination. Two processes against him were won until this date. In one case he was accused by the representative of the Armenian minority and the other one is by the representative of the Turkish minority. Both of them are not politically oriented.

It is clear – Volen Siderov managed to get that support thanks to his anti-Turkish and anti-Roma rhetoric. That is his characteristic, but now we can see that he is becoming softer.

**I.N.** – What can you say about their political programme characterized by the catchphrase – *To return Bulgarian to the Bulgarians?*

**M.I.** – They can say that they do not have anything against the Turks, but it is clear that that is not true. Perfect example is their rhetoric against the usage of the Turkish language at the Bulgarian national television (in fact it is used just 15 minutes per day), against the usage of Turkish language in schools, etc. They are claiming that the Bulgarian language is the official one. But there is also a question of the mother tongue and the rights that are based on it.

**I.N.** – I have heard from “Ataka” members that their opinion is that Bulgaria should also withdraw its participation from the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, because powerful state like France is also not in it.

**M.I.** – Indeed, France did not sign it, but almost all other states from the EU, like Spain, Poland, Germany, UK, Rumania, etc., had sign it and ratified it. As far as I know, from all of the members of the Council of Europe only France, Turkey, Belgium and Andorra did not sign it. But the rest of the members did sign it, and their number is around 50. Why they do not give examples of Germany, Spain, United Kingdom and others?

**I.N.** – Since „Ataka“ is using the MRF as a symbol for its anti-Turkish sentiment, what is your comment about its functioning in the period of the last 18 years? Some scholars describe it as a clientèle's party.

**M.I.** - In one my interview in the newspapers *Sega* in 2005 I have stated that this characteristic of the MRF is producing social disapproval. In that interview I have explained why I resigned from my place in the government administration where I was a Secretary of the National Council of Ethnic and Demographic Issues, and also I gave my opinion about the functioning of the MRF. From my point of view, the MRF is a party with a strong authoritarian rule of its leader and with quite spread clientèle. What is happening? That is a party which managed to control the majority of the electorate of the Turkish minority, but in the same time it is supporting the interest of the certain economic circles. So they are connecting their political activity with the economic interests in a very unacceptable way. And that is obvious to everyone. So that is the reason for the social dissatisfaction with the MRF.

When we connect this fact with the social-psychological distance that exists between Bulgarians and Turks, and with all of the fears that Bulgarians have from Turkey, we can predict the outcome. However, it is interesting that the people who have the benefit from this kind of politics of the MRF are not ethnic Turks. So we can see one party with ethnic electoral nuclear which is serving the economic interests which are ethnically colourless and we can see how that kind of politics is transforming social contradictions into the ethnic distances. The result is the growth of the anti-Turkish sentiment in Bulgaria. "Ataka" exploits that kind of sentiment, as a party whose main motto is "We want to stop Ahmed Dogan and the MRF as a Turkish party". This was happening before the parliamentary elections in 2005. Then the BSP officials said that the MRF is the strategic partner of the BSP. Immediately, a part of the electorate of the BSP started supporting "Ataka". On the other hand, the growing of "Ataka" and its rhetoric strengthened the fears of the Bulgarian ethno-nationalistic pressure in the Turkish community. (This is from my personal contact with some of my friends of Turkish origin). That caused the mobilisation of the Turkish electorate in favour of the MRF and the final result - more votes for the MRF. The final product is the strengthening of the two ethnocentrism, Bulgarian and Turkish. But I would like to underline again that the main cause for that was the economic politics of the MRF, which was participating in the Government for the whole mandate with the party of Simeon Saksoburggotski. Somebody could say that this happened because of the foreign factors – Le Pen in France, Jorg Heider in Austria, but the main cause in Bulgarian case is that what I have said already.

The other case is Roma. There is also a great social dissatisfaction because of the attitudes in the mainstream society that the Roma community receives great subsidies. If we make an analysis about the money that were given to Roma, we will see that, first of all, it is not such a big sum as it is presented in the public and secondly, we will see that there is no improvement of the situation of Roma. Roma did not become more literate, or healthier, their conditions of living remained on the same level. But the

totally reversed image was created in our media, that foreign funds are giving money just to Roma, that George Soros is also giving the money just to Roma and so on. Yes, it is a fact that the distances towards Roma are also great in our society - sociological surveys are the evidence that Roma are not accepted in very high percentage from 70% to even 90%. If 80% of the ethnic Bulgarians do not accept Roma, it is really easy to make a political platform based on the motto: "To stop the ongoing flow of resources towards the Roma which are given to them for free".

**I.N.** – "Ataka" representatives are saying that they do not have problems with the people of Roma origin, but with the "Gypsy mobsters" who are manipulating this community, like Cvetelin Kanchev.

**M.I.** - Roma group has its own stratification of course. Our society goes through a transition in which, as you can see, we have high corruption and money laundering. During the embargo against the FR Yugoslavia, there were people earning money in a dishonest way – illegal traffic of the gasoline for example. Members of the Roma community took part in the black business. But this business was preferably done by ethnic Bulgarians. I want to say that crime and corruption are not specificities of the Roma community. The huge parts of the corruption business are not in the hands of the Roma. I will give you an example. Roma are marked in the Bulgarian media as people who are stealing raw materials like electricity conductors which cause the breaks in the electricity supplies. They are also stealing traffic signs made of aluminium. One type of Mafia, which is stealing and selling coloured metals are also known in Bulgaria. But the bosses of that kind of mafia are not of Roma origin. It is true that these things are stolen, but there is other side of the story, because there are people (and they are not Roma) who are buying these stolen things which are later exported abroad. So there are speculations with the criminal activity of Roma in Bulgaria, and the truth is that some members of the Roma community are involved in such activity, but it is also the truth that they are involved at the lowest levels, the most primitive ones.

**I.N.** – In their document *Programme Scheme* "Ataka" is stating that they are for the reform of the judiciary sector. But in the same sentence they are extremely harsh towards the Roma community and they are underlining that they will adopt strong measures to "liquidate Gypsy criminality".

**M.I.** – That kind of public image was created that the Roma are the biggest criminals. "Ataka" is outlining this in its public statements because they are getting more public support, political dividends. Until today, I have not seen at least one action of "Ataka" in the Parliament which would suggest the mode how to limit the level of corruption. So that is just one political speculation and the game with the emotions of the citizens.

**I.N.** – What do you think about Volen Siderov as a journalist and also as a professional politician?

**M.I.** – Volen Siderov participated, at the beginning of the transition, in the informal movement. He was the member of the "273 Committee", which was named according to an article in the Penalty code which was prohibiting political activity during the



communist period. That Committee 273 was giving the support to the political prisoners, especially during the year 1989. They were providing the support especially to the political prisoners of the Turkish origin. I have a copy of a letter produced by this Committee which was signed also by Siderov. In this letter the Committee appealed to the Government to release the prisoners of the Turkish origin. He was one of the journalists of the newspaper *Democracy* founded at 1990 as an issue of the Movement of Democratic Forces. There was some crisis in the newspaper *Democracy*, some of the people left it, so Siderov for a time became the editor in chief of this newspaper.

Nowadays Volen Siderov as a journalist as well as a professional politician plays a negative role with his extreme populism and aggressive nationalism. I belong to those people who are trying to improve the ethnic relations in the Bulgarian society. At the beginning of changes we – a group of intellectuals - founded Committee for National Reconciliation as a multiethnic organisation for tolerance ethnic relations in our country. So when one's political activity has a potential for the ethnic conflict, of course my personal position would be against it. I cannot accept the political speculations of "Ataka" which are creating the danger of the ethnic conflict.

Now I would like to say something out of the ethnic topic. There is a dispute among the scholars in which part of political spectrum "Ataka" belongs to. Some of my colleagues, for which I have the highest respect, are claiming that "Ataka" is the extreme right party. My thesis is that "Ataka" is the extreme left party. For me the position of one party depends on their opinion how they see the role of the state with respect to the social and economic life. Extreme left policy we have when the state involves in the economic and social matters in a large scale. Extreme right policy – the participation of the government in the economic and social life is minimized. Far left is characterized with the nationalisation of the enterprises and the redistribution of wealth in order to "abolish poverty". Volen Siderov made some statements in favour of nationalisation. Their rhetoric and programme documents are directed towards the creation of the state which would be totally involved in the economic and social life. So they are not asking for the respect of law as the basis of development but for the total role of the state in the life of its citizens. In that sense it is clear that this party is not right orientated.

**I.N.** – Do you see "Ataka" as the anti-European party?

**M.I.** – In my opinion they are Euro-sceptics. One can see that lately "Ataka" has softened its rhetoric. This softening of the ethnic politics is marked by their efforts to explain their policy - that they are not anti-Turkish and anti-Roma, but they are against the criminals. But I think that they, for now, cannot risk losing their supporters, simply because they got them thanks to their radical rhetoric. In that sense they have established the connections with Le Pen and other European national populists who are against the immigrants, in other words against the people who are not "ours". The same can be said for the politics of "Ataka" which is presenting Bulgarian citizens of Roma and Turkish origin as also not "ours". But in the last time they are trying to be right. It seems that "Ataka" is doing whatever is possible to be recognized as a partner

from the other right opposition parties, and to become a part of the possible future right alliance. Next year we will have the parliamentary elections and it is very probably that the major party, pretending to be a right one, namely CEDB, could not make the government alone. But there are big chances for the formation of the right government in a form of coalition; therefore "Ataka" is trying to enter it. In this connection they are also trying to make a clear distinction from the BSP.

**I.N.** – How do you comment the fragmentation of the parliamentary group of "Ataka"?

**M.I.** - The fact is that people of different political and ideological background were gathered in that group. If you, for example, take the political circle "Nova Zora", and if you analyse their newspaper you will find ideas which are openly communistic ones. On the other hand there is a clearly expressed nationalism, especially anti-Turkish nationalism. There are also people who were working in the administration of the state or as diplomats in the former period. Besides them there are also neo-populists like Dimitar Stoyanov and former activists of the UDF like Volen Siderov and Pavel Shopov. That group is so heterogeneous that it is not strange if they have inner conflicts.

They are making a sort of the fascist image, but I cannot describe them as such. Violence is not a characteristic of this party. Discourtesy and arrogance are their characteristics and of course language of hatred but there is no physical violence in their behaviour.

**I.N.** – In the foreign politics "Ataka" is quite explicitly outlined its orientation against the influence of Turkey in Bulgaria and even in the EU? What is your opinion about this?

**M.I.** – There is a well known fact that in the totalitarian times Ahmed Dogan was an agent of the Bulgarian intelligence who was trained to work against Turkey. Along with many members of his party which means that he is not a "Trojan horse" of the politics of Turkey in Bulgaria. So we know that the MRF was practically founded with an active participation of the Bulgarian intelligence service, we also know with which economical circles it is connected. The MRF was seriously connected with the Multi Group – a big corporation which was on its own connected with the Russian company Gazprom.. But, we must also consider the fact that Turkey cannot ignore the MRF because of the influence of this party among the Turkish ethnic minority in Bulgaria.

**I.N.** – There are opinions that can be heard from "Ataka"'s officials that Turkey is sending its companies and workers to Bulgaria, to the regions populated by the Bulgarian Turks. Thanks to the MRF they are privileged in these areas in order to get jobs. And the only thing that is built in these regions are mosques.

**M.I.** –As I know practically, there are no big economic players in Bulgaria which are "in Turkish hands". As far as the mosques, the Kemalism which is the ideological basis of the Turkish state is for the division between the religion and the state. Kemal Ataturk has dislodged 150 most conservative Islamic clergymen from Turkey when he came to power. Let me remark also that a big struggle over Islam is in Turkey now. There is one really strong Kemalist stream and one really strong stream of Islam in this

country. Our secret services for years were working to create totally reversed image of Turkey among the Bulgarians. The pupils in schools do not learn anything about that was happening in Turkey, and we have as a nation completely wrong image of the politics of Turkey.

There is one more thing. If you look at the Turkish neighbours, you will see that the only stable Turkish border is the one with Bulgaria. Next question is where the path to Europe for Turkey is? The logical answer is– via Bulgaria.

## Interview with Professor Anthony Todorov, New Bulgarian University

**25<sup>th</sup> April, 2008**

**I.N.** – What is the reason of the upraise of one party like “Ataka” at the moment when Bulgaria had reached its goal set 10 years before that, and that is the accession to the EU? For many, that was the point when the transition period in Bulgaria had finished. More or less, country has reached its economic stabilisation.

**A.T** – In my mind I can see two types of reasons for appearance of “Ataka” – socio-economic and political reasons. At the end of the post-communist transition there was a division in the society into two main parts, let’s say the winners and the losers. Among the losers, there was a part of the society, which belonged to different parts of the social strata. One part of them felt betrayed by the politicians, by the political elite and so on. People who, in fact, lost their previous social status, objective but most importantly their subjective image of their social status. They were, for instance, teachers in schools, or pensioners and others. Now they are pensioners with very low incomes, without any special belongings and property or inheritance. These people, 15 years later, realized that for them there is no positive solution. Transition is over and they are losers. It is a kind of perception of the results of the post communist transition. Parties like “Ataka”, so called new nationalist populist parties, found their electoral support in this part of the society. On the other hand, there are political reasons – deep crisis of the right wing of the political spectre in Bulgaria. That happened because of the destruction of the historical democratic right wing parties – the UDF and the DSB. Former UDF has split into three separated parties. Of course, from the beginning of the transition process, the extreme right parties existed, but the mainstream right wing parties were able to control them and not to give much space to them. The parties like the Bulgarian National Radical Party (a para- fascist party) or the so-called Bulgarian National Movement, which was 10 years ago called the Rightist Democratic Movement. Nowadays the party called Gvardia appeared. All of these parties were marginal political forces until the moment of the crash of the democratic right. From one side there were socio-economic reasons, which resulted in the appearance of the audience for this kind of political strategies and on the other hand specific political reasons. Among these political reasons, it is interesting to see the political genealogy of “Ataka”, from which kind of political circles they come. On one side, these people come from the far right parties that have existed during the whole transition period. I have already quoted some of them. The second source includes the people from the former communist party and its conservative wing, which was very nationalist in the beginning of the transition. One of these organisations was the Committee for the defence of the National Interest. This organization appeared in 1990, at the very beginning of the transition process as a

reaction to the restitution of the names of Bulgarian Turks. During the first government of the socialist party, before the elections for the Great National Assembly the new elite, of this former communist party, in order to pacify tensions on the political scene decided to make this move and annulate the results of the so-called Bulgarisation of the names in 1984-1985. The third sources are the people who come from the former secret services and former high military officers. Motivated by the nationalistic views and feared by the impact of the foreign states and foreign factors within the Bulgarian political scene they have formed various organisations like *Zashtita* (Defence). This organisation was led by the former officers or the people from the secret services or it was supported by Petar Beron. The fourth source are the people disappointed in the UDF and the democratic right. They were disappointed with the social policy of the rightist government – probably, they expected different distribution of wealth among the people. Volen Siderov was also one of those involved at the early UDF. He has quite an interesting history. At the end of the 1980s he was a member of the "273 group" (named by the famous article of the Bulgarian penal law), which had been used by the communist government against dissidents and dissident organisations. He was organising the signing of many petitions for releasing of political prisoners. Even at that time he was often a guest in the shows on the international radio stations like the Radio Free Europe or the Voice of America or the Deutche Welle etc. This was the real beginning of his political career. At the very beginning, he was among the leaders of the UDF. For more than two years, he was the editor in chief of the party's journal *Democracy*.

The history of the internal development of the UDF was marked by many splits and conflicts. I think that he also took part in this confrontation, and he was forced to leave his post in the Democracy by other people who came to the UDF. He was not alone, many other leaders and common members left the UDF in this turbulent period of the party's development. Siderov was disappointed probably because he found the UDF more liberal than he would have liked it to be. After leaving the UDF he became the editor in chief of the newspaper *Monitor*, which had a nationalist discourse. He had some kind of column in the newspaper, where ultranationalist and even racist views and comments were expressed. By this time, he published his first books *The Boomerang of Evil* and *Bulgarofobia*, where you can find not just xenophobic but also racist and anti-Semitic ideas.

By that time, he began to collaborate with SKAT television. SKAT is a cable television, which appeared in Burgas, city on the coast of the Black Sea. Later Volen Siderov got his show which was broadcasted every day under the name *Ataka*. This collaboration with the SKAT television allowed him to prepare his audience for his future political engagement. Many people were saying that this television was financed by the Russian dark businesses, but I cannot tell you if that is really the truth. After a few months of broadcasting, Volen Siderov became very popular – so his show helped him organize the party. In the very beginning, this was not a party but a coalition of four parties, because of the provisions of the new law on political parties. They

were as following: before mentioned Committee for the Defence of National Interest, organisation *Defense*, the organisation of Bojan Rasate and another one whose name I cannot recall. Soon, three of these four organizations distanced themselves from Volen Siderov, so he maybe used the fourth party to inscribe "Ataka" as a legal entity.

**I.N.** – Mr. Anton Sirakov told me that some kind of a pre-election contract was signed, in which it was confirmed that the person in charge is Volen Siderov?

**A.T.** – Yes, but some of the members of the parliamentary group were excluded because they had supported, with their votes, the government of Stanishev, during one of these difficult turns of voting to form a new government. After that, many people left the group "Ataka". The Law on political parties recognizes political parties as the entities in the parliament, which receive the subsidies from the state budget and not the coalition. The question remains. Which legal entity took the money? I think that that must be the fourth organization which is under the control of Volen Siderov.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something more about the rhetoric of "Ataka"? The main issues that they are addressing are the MRF, Anti-Americanism etc?

**A.T.** – In my opinion, Bulgaria is in an extremely complicated situation when it comes to the political representation of the ethnic minorities, Turks in particular. It is not the same for Roma or for other ethnic minorities. What about Turks and the DPS? You know, more or less, something about the appearance of the MRF. It appeared as a political party and during these two decades a long process of implantation in the society occurred. Because it was not an automatic process of alignment of one party that claimed that it represents the Bulgarian Turks and the Turkish population in Bulgaria. It would be interesting to see the political study of the electoral dynamics of the MRF. We would see that this dynamics was not straightforwardly in favour of the MRF. The minimum of the voices that the MRF got on elections was around 200.000 – 250.000 and the maximum is around 450.000 voices. Therefore, this is a big difference – mobilisation and demobilisation of the voters. You can see that this support of the Turkish minority to the MRF is not given, and this party has to work a lot for their support. On the other side, the so-called national parties like the BSP, UDF and others – the parties that claimed to represent all the citizens of Bulgaria at the first three parliamentary elections almost did not have candidates who were of the origin of national minorities. The Bulgarian Turks at the beginning were not able to find candidates for the MPs who were like them. In my opinion, their future reaction was expected. More and more they began to support the MRF. On the other hand, the MRF, being politically and ethnically isolated during these first electoral terms in two thirds of municipalities got 0 votes – they had voices only in the municipalities populated by the Bulgarian Turks. The MRF changed a lot. For example: The representatives of the MRF in a small village populated by the Bulgarian Turks – they told them: *Listen! Vote for the MRF and we will arrange something for you (asphalting of the streets in the village or the water provision or something like that)*; the population of the village decided to support the MRF and of course the MRF arranged that what they had promised earlier. As you can see very strange kind of play, but the clientele network was also created



during the privatization of the state owned property while the MRF was participating in the Government. One of the best known cases is the privatization of Bulgartabac – Bulgarian tobacco company. The MRF abolished the privatization of the Bulgartabac Company in order to keep the way of production of tobacco in the regions which are predominantly populated by the Bulgarian Turks. In that way the MRF helped the local population to keep their incomes in the short term. But on another hand, because of that the economy of these areas was kept on the same level as it was.

But there is another point. Although, it is true what I had previously said, there is also a question what did the other, national parties do for these regions, for these tobacco producers. Nothing! The national parties like the BSP or the UDF during their participation in the Government did not do anything to improve the territorial management of the country, including these areas. Sustainable regional development was a non-existing policy during the whole period of transition.

**I.N.** – How did "Ataka" manage to put the issue of anti-Turkish sentiment on such a high level? Was this because of the policy which was conducted by the MRF representatives or it was already present – like the memories about the yoke of the Ottoman empire etc?

**A.T.** – I can say that the anti -Turkish sentiments are traditional for the one part of the Bulgarian society, which is sensitive to the nationalist ideas. The Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian history is seen as a big national tragedy. This is due to the history classes, conducted at schools and universities. So Turkey is seen as the traditional enemy of Bulgaria. However, in the beginning of transition, I think that it has changed for many Bulgarians, and for many different reasons. After the problem related to the changing of the names of Bulgarian Turks was solved in 1990, the sentiment almost disappeared within the society. There were tensions in the areas from where Turkish people left. Their belongings, houses and other property was taken away from them by the ethnic Bulgarian families. Therefore, this Bulgarian population was beneficiary of the second part of the "Revival process". We can say that there is a kind of traditional anti-Turkish attitude, which is not spread across the entire society, especially not among the intellectuals and in the big cities. In these areas that kind of attitude is quite rare. Nevertheless, with this process of the transformation of the MRF into the clientelist party another kind of opposition was created, not anti –Turkish but anti –MRF. Those were mostly the people from the areas with the Turkish majority and they were very harsh towards the MRF and its deeds. And I personally know the people who told me that it was practically impossible to start a business in these regions without the permission of the MRF officials. This clientelist network provoked a new wave of the anti-MRF attitude, which was easily used by "Ataka" and other nationalist forces. They started to use this attitude in combination with the old one about the Turkish yoke, and now they are portraying Turks as historical enemies of Bulgaria.

**I.N.** – But what about the anti Roma rhetoric of "Ataka", in other words which is the background of it?

**A.T.** – During the previous period, the Roma people were (regarded as an ethnic

but also as a social category) the sector of the society which was the most marginalized in economic and social sense. My first seven years of education were in the school, which was close to the part of the city of Sofia which was populated mainly by the Roma. There were 43 pupils in the class and a half of them were Roma. I can tell you that at that time I did not realise that these classmates of mine were Roma. Our part of the city was quite poor, so there were no big differences among us. Most of the pupils came from the families where parents had regular jobs. Then, when the transition period started, these people lost their status in a very dramatic way. I will give you an example. Two months ago, I was in the regional police station and I saw a mother and her daughter of Roma origin. The mother was filling out the documents for her daughter while she was standing and watching. The conclusion is imminent: the mother who was born during the communism was literate, while the daughter who was probably born during the transition period was illiterate. The mother probably finished at least the elementary school. It was absolutely surprising for me to see what kind of a change the transition made to the Roma community. Of course, this loss of social status produced suitable conditions for the development of the various kinds of delinquency. More and more, in the eyes of the public Roma were seen as the core of the delinquency in Bulgaria. That was the background of the anti Roma rhetoric and how it was used by the parties like "Ataka".

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something about the programme of "Ataka"? There are few main areas in it: recreation of the Bulgarian state, Economic programme etc.

**A.T.** – Their economic programme is quite interesting. The essence of their economic part of the programme is against the way in which the privatization was conducted in the transition period. They are talking about the re-nationalisation of the certain enterprises in order to resituate the justice of the "criminal" privatization that occurred. This is a quite leftist part of their programme. I think that we cannot understand their programme, these living principles of their party, without knowing the context of their rhetoric and their political discourse. One of the main points of their rhetoric is against the oligarchy rule in Bulgaria, criminal privatization, the national betrayal of the real national interest of the Bulgarian people. This discourse is socially oriented, but oriented to the Bulgarian people who they see as genuine Bulgarians, by their origin. It is possible to find this definition in the writings of Volen Siderov, how he defines the real Bulgarian. I think that this rhetoric can be defined as the national populism. We can find other examples in Europe. Let's say that Le Pen in France began with the same kind of rhetoric – *Let's return France to the French, more social justice, against the corrupted political class, against the growing oligarchy, against the political privileges for minority groups*. This idea to get back Bulgaria to Bulgarians in the sense of Bulgarian people has this meaning – stop the political privileges of some minority groups. Among them are of course the Turkish people and Roma, because of the subsidies that they are receiving from the state. For me, this is a classical national populist reaction.

Now the question is how to identify this? Is it leftist or rightist? Of course,

like every populist discourse this is at the same time leftist, because of its socially oriented discourse, but in the same time nationalist or rightist oriented discourse. I think that the representatives of "Ataka" defined themselves with the membership in the parliamentary group of the far right (*Identity, Sovereignty, and Tradition*) and not in the group of the far left with the communists or ecological movement etc. I think that they had a quite clear idea of their own political identity. However, at this moment they think that it is reasonable not to express openly their racism or xenophobe ideas and so on. The reasons are various, the European Union, or because they want to be politically correct or simply because they want to spread their influence in electorate and enlarge their electoral support. Many of the supporters of "Ataka" do not know anything about the racist discourse of Volen Siderov and do not share these views.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something about the party's development from 2005 to the present date? During these three years Parliamentary elections were held in Bulgaria, elections for the President of the state, the elections for the European Parliament and in the end the municipal elections.

**A.S.** – At the presidential elections of 2006 Volen Siderov managed to enter the second turn of elections. This happened because of the crisis of the democratic right, which did not have any serious candidate for this post. I think that the democratic right did not have any democratic reflex during these elections. They did not vote for Parvanov on the second round. Only some people from the UDF, by the way Maria Kapon declared clearly that she will vote for Parvanov in the second round, not for Parvanov but against Volen Siderov. That was not the same reaction as in France. I was astonished that this happened, because in any case we cannot compare Parvanov with Siderov in any sense, it is impossible. That is not the same type of political profile. When Kostov said: *That is the same, former communists* – simply, that is not true. It is not true that Siderov is a former communist, and Parvanov is not a former member of nomenclature. He was the researcher at the Institute for History. He was within the structures of the communist party, but he was not at all a member of the leadership of the party. Therefore, we cannot compare Siderov and Parvanov and say that they are coming from the same source.

**I.N.** – And what about the European elections? They had quite anti-Islam rhetoric, or better anti-Turkish rhetoric. In fact, they put up the opinion that they are for the European unity in some sense but without Turkey in it. On the other hand in their document *Programme Scheme* they said that they are for the strengthening of the relations with Russia and the Arabic world, before all others. How it was possible that "Ataka", at these elections, got three deputies?

**A.T.** – I think that the main cause for that was the mobilization of the party electorate. "Ataka" and the MRF succeeded in mobilizing their electorate better than the other parties. We had a very low outturn at the elections, around 29%. Therefore, the BSP and the NMSS did not really succeed in mobilizing their electorate. The most pro-European parties, like the UDF or even the DSB are not, at the moment, represented in the EP. Two of the deputies are quite significant, Dimitar Stoyanov and Slavcho

Binev. Slavi Binev is a political opportunist. Therefore, he found the political support. In my opinion he has no ideology, he is clearly a political opportunist. About Dimitar Stoyanov, I know his father, who is a son of a quite known Bulgarian intellectual. Dimitar Stoyanov comes from the circles, which are supported by the nomenclature dissidents. His grandfather had a quite ambiguous position. His father, Kin Stoyanov was involved in the UDF like many sons of the former nomenclature dissidents. I think that Stoyanov grew without any special attention from his parents. His reaction in the European Parliament was unthinkable. Most certainly, it happened because of his bad family education. He did not realise that this kind of action will produce such kind of a scandal.

**I.N.** – And what had happened on the last municipal elections?

**A.T.** – I have all these figures and I can give them to you. However, "Ataka" at these elections did not get any mayors. "Ataka" did not have any electoral progress. The presidential elections were an exception. Volen Siderov did not mobilise only "Ataka" but also many other people against Parvanov. But on the last municipal elections "Ataka" remained on the same level as it was during the elections for the EP.

**I.N.** – What can you tell me about the cooperation among the opposition in the Parliament? "Ataka" is a party, which can be easily described as an anti-systemic party.

**A.T.** – "Ataka" did not have any strategic cooperation in the Parliament. They were in the coalition with some of the rightist parties in the municipal elections. For example, in Blagoevgrad they participated with the UDF, with Kostov in a kind of anti-BSP coalition. For tactical reasons "Ataka" cooperates with the other political parties, but not with the parties which were or are in the coalition with the MRF. Nevertheless, in the Parliament there is not significant cooperation, because other parties are very reluctant to cooperate with them. They are quite careful with their connections with "Ataka", mainly because of their international profile. During the second round of the presidential elections, the vice president of the European Peoples Party told to the UDF and the DSB to vote against Siderov. For them, the situation with "Ataka" is the same like in France, like in Germany. It is impossible to cooperate with such kind of a political party.

**I.N.** – Can you tell me something more about the international cooperation of "Ataka".?

**A.T.** – Le Pen came to Sofia during the second round of the presidential elections to support "Ataka". However, there were some news about the creation of some kind of a supranational party on the European level from the parties, which cooperated in the EP parliamentary group *Identity, Sovereignty and Tradition*. Nevertheless, it is not likely that this would happen because of the system of functioning of the supranational parties on the European level. A tactical cooperation is possible but they cannot have a strategic programme to carry out together.

## APPENDIX II

### PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENTS OF THE POLITICAL PARTY “ATAKA”

#### 20 PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL UNION “ATAKA”

1. Bulgaria is a mono-national and monolithic state, undivided upon none of the following principles: religious, ethnic and cultural. The difference in ethnic origin or religion cannot be over the national belonging. The one who does that, he can cause his separation from the Bulgarian nation and state thus cannot have any pretensions towards it.

2. The official language is Bulgarian and there cannot be broadcast in any other language on the national media, supported from the state’s budget. Forbidding and clear sanctions for ethnic parties and separatist organizations.

3. Severe sanctions for abusing the Bulgarian holy things and blasphemy against Bulgaria.

4. Health and social security, education, spiritual and material prosperity of the Bulgarian nation are the priorities for the state’s government. It stands before all entrances to political, military and other international alliances.

5. The Bulgarian state is obligated to provide health and social security and to provide a suitable basis for the spiritual and material progress of all Bulgarian citizens with all the resources of the state’s authority.

6. Every Bulgarian investor, entrepreneur and producer should be privileged over foreign businessman, before the equalization of the living standards with the ones in Central Europe. Bulgarian production, trade and banks should be in Bulgarian hands.

7. Taxes and incomes in Bulgaria should be in accordance with the capabilities and needs of the inhabitants of Bulgaria, and not with the demands of the IMF and the World Bank.

8. Privatization deals should be subjected to revision.

9. Bulgarian business, regardless of being private or state’s, is supported by the state in Bulgaria and abroad.

10. General composition of the budget scheme should be public and the redistribution of the budget should be directed towards the benefit of the Bulgarian citizens . Lowering of state’s administration.

11. Programme for the prevention of the demographical decline of Bulgarians.

12. Urgent retreat of the army (Bulgarian) from Iraq.

13. Abandoning of the membership in the NATO. Without participating in military blocs. Full neutrality. Without foreign military bases on the Bulgarian territory.

14. Referendums on all important questions, with minimal out-turn of the 10% of the nation.

15. Bulgarian agricultural land should not be sold to the foreigners.

16. Revision of the closed negotiations with the EU and renegotiating of the burdensome parts of the contract for Bulgaria. Refusing of the contract for closure of the “Koslodui” Nuclear Power Plant.

17. Staunch of Bulgarian dependency on the IMF and the World Bank.

18. Introducing of the action “Clean Hands”. Processing of the enriched criminals and all cases with the involved politicians, and also the processes on the foreign debts.

19. Confiscation of illegally acquired property and founding of the fund for the free medical services financed from the confiscated property. Juridical defining of the term “national traitor”. The court for national traitors.

20. Minimal wage for workers should be defined by the law – payments per hour equal to the Central European ones.

### PROGRAMME SCHEME

#### 1. Economy

Shaping of a clear model of social capitalism, with a direction from state’s to private ownership. Revision of the privatization processes. Strategic priorities in the Bulgarian



economy, which *should be stimulated by the state's politics* – high technologies, inventions, chemistry, electronics, arms industry and agriculture. Reaching of the necessary conditions for real and sufficient GDB of the Bulgarian nation. Creation of the conditions for its creation on the basis of inner resources. *Special government's programme for balance of the Bulgarian resources*. They should not pass lower border of the rentable production. In other words, it should not produce with strong dependence on foreign factors. Variants for abolition of the dependency on the IMF and the World Bank. Redirection to inner resources from the gray economy and the non-taken budgetary incomes to the Budget. Redistribution of the resources in the budget itself to the direction of investigations to strategical sectors, science activity and patenting of the Bulgarian inventions and products. Redirection of the budget resources to the social and health security funds, to release the burden from every working Bulgarian, Abolition of all administrative and legislative obstacles for entrepreneurs. Without license regimes. Politics of active credit arrangements for every entrepreneur. No income taxes. *Family taxes - every man pays in accordance with his capabilities – and not equally*. Introduction of coordinated computer tax and customs system, which would permit the control over tax and customs gatherings. Re-examination of the foreign debt. Active politics towards the foreign factors for its remission. Guaranteed minimal vague, reciprocal to the European. *Special program for stimulation and keeping of computer programmers in Bulgaria, financed from the budget*.

## 2. National security, order, anti-mafia and criminality

Redefinition of the military doctrine. Conformation of the army's numbers and the military budget to those in neighboring states. Creation of police with respective incomes with possibilities for investigating activity. *Introduction of the precinct police officers and patrols*. *Government's programme for fight against drug dealers and smugglers*. Introduction of European measures for drug addicts. Creation of the data basis of drug addicts. Shortened court procedures for the drug dealers. Reintroduction of the intelligence services and the guarantees for their independent work. Inclusion of patriotically orientated former officers to the system of customs and tax officials. Creation of a profile of criminality in last 10 years on the basis of data basis of the police and special services. Creating a programme for the efficient measures based on that profile. Government's programme for lowering and liquidating of **the gypsy criminality**.

## 3. Health security

Introduction of the elements of the old health security, which was a variant of

today's English system. Gathering of the basic part of health expenses from the budget, until the incomes of Bulgarians become equal to the European ones.

## 4. Social security

Introduction of the minimum pension, corresponding to the European pensions. Security in accordance with the incomes of every person separately. Optional individual security, if desired. State's guaranteed pension funds with clear control over the movement of money of pensions.

## 5. Education, science, technology, culture

Introduction of the traditional Bulgarian and European (not American) education system, with special investments to the strategic areas of education – high technologies and programming. Special state's fund for research and promotion in Bulgaria and abroad of its history and its historical completeness and perfection. Creation of special institutes of Bulgaristics, with a guaranteed budget, at which our and foreign specialists would do a research, archive and popularize all possible sources for true Bulgarian history and the role and importance of the Bulgarians in the world's civilization. Special fund for exploration and protection of Bulgarian cultural values in Bulgarian lands. Special for its popularization in the world.

Funds and scholarships for talented Bulgarian children and youth. Funds and scholarships for the protection of Bulgarian folklore and its popularization in the world. Law on protection of Bulgarian language.

## 6. Religion

Urgent restitution of the church's property. Legislative defining of the orthodoxy as the official religion in Bulgaria. Introduction of religion course in the elementary education. Consulting with the Holy Synod (of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church) on all important problems of society, legislative projects, and creation of status of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as, organizationally and financially, stable institution, which should take the decisive place in Bulgarian society and to mirror the value system for the future of Bulgaria.

## 7. Court System

Working prosecutors' office. Investigation of corrupted magistrates. Creation of an efficient court system. The reintroduction of the death sentence.

## 8. Media

Removing of the high Value Added Tax on the printed media. Removing of the court persecution of journalists.

## 9. Internal politics

(election principle, referendums, reverse connection with the authority, legislative priorities)

*Introduction of the system of referendums on all important national questions:* replacement of the society-political system, joining of the military alliances, elections system and others

Possibilities for the legislative withdrawal of the MPs in cases of failure to fulfill their promises to the electorate.

Possibilities for the election of candidates for the MPs from the citizens' associations (NGOs) out of political parties. Complete financing of the elections from the budget. Equal opportunities for public representation of all candidates, without requirements for the numerous party membership and the parliamentary representation of the party parliamentary representation. Law on political parties, which allow registration and involvement on the elections without the need for numerable membership and structure. The criteria should be the presentation of the party at the previous elections. Without restrictions for the new parties.

## 10. Foreign politics

(relations with the EU, Russia, USA, neighboring countries, balance of their influence in Bulgaria, involvement in the military alliances and international-legislative alliances) Creation of the national doctrine on **the basis of non-contested sovereignty**. Neutrality towards the military alliances. Army and armament should be in accordance with real relations with the forces in the region. Fast opening towards the East, South and all states, which could offer something to Bulgaria. **The negotiations with the EU are not the most important for the life of Bulgarians**. If the trade with India is better for Bulgaria than the trade with France, take the Indian connection. The same goes for China, Japan, Russia and former Soviet republics. Non-involvement in the inner matters of the neighboring states. **Non-allowance to big states to shape their politics towards other states from the Bulgarian territory and to ask for its support. Activation of Bulgarian-Russian relations and relations with the Arab world, with the Far East and the states out of the EU.**

## STATUTE OF THE POLITICAL PARTY “ATAKA”

### I Name and symbol

Art 1 (1) The name of the political party is “Ataka”

(2) Further in this Statute the political party “Ataka” will be called shortly “the Party”

Art 2. Symbol of the Party is stylized image of the letter “A” from old-Bulgarian alphabet

### II Seat and the address Leadership

Art 3 (1) The seat and address of the leadership of the Party is: Sofia county, Capital municipality, town of Sofia, boulevard “Vasil Levski “ № 90.

(2) Electronic address of the Party: ataka@atakabg.com

### III Goals and ways for their fulfillment

Art.4 Basic goals of the Party are: fast and constant improvement of the life conditions in Bulgaria, and the recovery of the national dignity of Bulgarians and international prestige of the country.

Art. 5 Ways for fulfillment of the basic goals of the Party are all the legal means of social-political influence; legal popularization of goals and values, apprehended and defended by the Party, participation in elections (directly or trough helping of ideologically close subjects).

### IV Leading organs of the Party are:

1. National Council
2. Central Council
3. Consultative Council
4. Municipal Assembly
5. Municipal Board

Art.7. (1) The National Council is the supreme leading organ of the Party.

(2) The decisions of the National Council are obligatory for all members and for all other leading organs of the Party.

(3) The first national Council of the Party is its Founding Assembly.

Art. 9 The Consultative Council is the national consulting leading organ of the Party

Art. 10 The Municipal Assembly is the community of the members of the Party within the corresponding municipal organizations

Art.11. The Municipal Board is the executive organ of the corresponding municipal organization of the party.

Art. 12. Control organ of the Party is the Control Assembly.  
V Rules or the representatives of the political party

Art. 13 (1) The Party is represented by the president

(2) The president can give the authority to the deputy-president to represent party for a concrete activity. The authority should be explicit.

(3) In the case of physical disability of both the president and the deputy-president (illness or death), or in the case that they have left the party or resigned from their posts, the Party will be represented by the person elected by the Central Council. In that case the Central Council should summon the National Council.

VI The order of summoning, electing and releasing of the leading and control organs and their authorities

Art 14 (1) The National Council is summoned at least once a year, by the Central Council. The National Council can be also summoned on the request of not less than one third of municipal boards.

(2)National Council is functioning on the delegate principle – one delegate for every 20 member of every municipal organization. In the cases when the number of members of the municipal organization is not dividable with 20 without the rest, one delegate more is authorized to participate.

(3)The summoning of the National Council is done on a written request sent to all the municipal councils, set at the place for announcements, in the building where the seat of the party is situated and by issuing the request in the "National journal"at least one month before the date.

(4)The request should be consisted of the timetable of the session, hour and place of the National Council and the explanation of the reasons and why it was summoned.

Art. 15. National Council is regular if more than half of delegates are present. In the case that the session is out of quorum, the National Council is delayed for one hour later, on the same place and with the same timetable, and can be proceed if the necessary number of delegates appear.

Art.16 National Council:

1. changes and supplements the Statute brought by the Founding Assembly;
2. adopts other inner acts;

3. elects and releases from the duty the president of the Party;

4. elects and releases from the duty the Central Council and Control Council on the recommendation of the president of the Party; if the recommendation is denied, the president recommends other candidates;

5. adopts the solutions for the reformation or closure of the Party;

6. adopts the programmes and basic directions of the Party's activity

7. adopts the budget of the Party

8. adopts the solutions and merits and the range of membership dues; that right can be transcended to the Municipal Assemblies;

9. adopts reports about the functioning of the Central Council and Control Council;

10. arranges the real estates of the Party;

11. changes the solutions of other organs of the Party, if they are not in accordance with the law, Statute or other inner acts, regulating the activity of the Party

Art.17 (1) The Central Council is elected and released from the duty by the National Council, on the recommendation of the president of the Party.

(2)The Central Council is composed of 7 members: the president of the Party, deputy-president, treasurer and four other members.

(3) Central Council:

1. solves all the issues of the daily operative politics on the terrain, between the sessions of the National Council

2. decides about the candidates for the members of parliament;

3. issues indications on the application of the Statute

4. arranges other property of the Party

Art. 18 (1) Consultative Council includes in its composition the Central Council and the area coordinators.

(2) Consultative Council examines the standpoint of the Party organizations and their members and creates corresponding recommendations before the National Council for the creation of the national politics.

Art.19. (1) The Municipal Assembly is summoned by the Municipal board, at least once a year.

(2) Municipal Assembly:

1.elects the Municipal Board, on the recommendation of the president; if the recommendation is denied, the president proposes other candidates

2. Recommends the candidates for the members of the parliament, and sends it to the Central Council for approval

3. Elects the candidates for the local authority organs

4. adopts recommendation, with the area coordinator, for forming of the national politics

(3) Municipal Assembly is conducted with the obligatory participation of the



area coordinator

Art.20 (1) Municipal board is composed of five members: the president, the deputy-president, treasurer and two other members:

(2) The president of the Municipal Board is nominated by the president of the Party;

(3) Deputy-president, treasurer and two other members of the Municipal Board are elected and released from the duty by the Municipal Assembly, on the recommendation of the president.

Art. 21 (1) The Control Council is elected and released by the National Council, on the recommendation of the president of the Party

(2) Control Council is composed of the president and two other members

(3) Control Council verifies all party's decisions and actions, and recommends measures in the cases of constant discrepancy with the law or/and Statute to the National Council or Central Council.

#### VII Membership in the Party

Art.22 Member of the Party can be every Bulgarian citizen, who is not deprived from his election rights, has at least 18 years, is active, is not a member of other political party and in relation with him does not exist any decision in accordance with the Law which prevents his membership in a political party.

Art. 23 (1) Person who wants to become a member, applies to the Municipal Board in accordance with his permanent address. If in the municipality where the applicant has permanent address does not exist the Municipal Board, the application is sent to the nearest neighboring municipality of the same area.

(2)The Municipal Board issues the decision in seven days from the date of applying.

(3)The decision of the Municipal Board, which denies the request of the applicant, or a dumb rejection (non respecting of the deadline from par.2), can be challenged before the Central Council in the range of 7 days from receiving of the decision. The Central Council is authorized to issue a final solution, 7 days from the receiving of the objection.

Art. 24 (1) The membership in the party is ceased:

1. with the written application to municipal board; in that case the membership can be considered as ceased from the moment of sending or receiving of the application.
  2. In the case of death or losing the election rights or capabilities
  3. in the case of exclusion
  4. in the case of cease of the Party's existance
- (2) The decision of exclusion is taken by the Municipal Board of the organization

where the excluded is a member, for behavior which makes further membership in discordance with the law, Statute or other inner acts, specifying the activity of the Party. These decisions can be challenged before the Central Council, whose decision is final.

(3) The solution for exclusion can be also performed by the Central Council.

#### VIII Rights and duties of the members

Art. 25 (1) The membership in the party is based on the free will.

(2)Every member has the right to participate in the Party's management (to elect and be elected in its leading organs), to be proposed for a candidate of the party for the election duties in the organs of authority, to be informed about the activities of the Party and to have a use of that activity, in order foreseen by the Statute

(3) Every elections can be started with the self-proposing for the candidate.

(4) Every member is obligated to respect the Statute, to fulfill the decisions of the leading organs, to participate in the Party's activities and to pay a membership fee.

#### IX Rules for the creation of Party's structures and their rights and duties

Art. 26. The Party structures are:

1. Municipal organizations
2. Area Coordinators

Art. 27 (1) Municipal organization includes all the members of the party with the permanent address in the same municipality.

(2) Organs of the Municipal organization are the Municipal Assembly and the Municipal Board.

(3) Rights and duties of the Municipal Assembly and Municipal Board are regulated with the Art.19 and Art.20 of this Statute

(4) Organs of the municipal organization cannot issue political statements, which are in discordance with the already formed national politics.

Art.28 (1) Area coordinators are chosen and responsible to the president of the Party.

(2) Area coordinators obligatory participate in all Municipal Assemblies in the area.

(3) Area coordinators participate in the Consultative Council.

#### X Rules for determining of the range of the membership fee

Art. 29 (1) The membership fee is 1% of the nett of monthly incomes of the party's member.

(2) Membership fee is declared and paid on the basis of free will

(3) Party's members with low incomes or without incomes are not paying a membership fee

Art 30. Rules or duties and range of the membership fee could be changed by the Central Council or by the explicit delegation – of the municipal board – in the case of concrete situation in the country which determines ownership conditions of separated social groups (working people, students, pensioners, unemployed).

XI Rules for gartering and expenditure of the sources and for the distribution of the party’s ownership

Art. 31. The incomes of the party are from:

1. membership fee
2. real estates of the Party
3. gifts and donations
4. donations from other organizations or companies
5. interests from the money deposits in the banks
6. publishing activity, author rights and use of intellectual ownership, and from the selling and distribution of written, audio and audio-visual materials with party-propaganda content.
7. the incomes from the funding activities

Art. 32. (1) The property of the Party (not real estates) is under the guidance of the Central Council

(2) For every activity with the property of the Party, the Central Council reports to the National Council

Art. 33. Real estates of the Party are under the guidance of the National Council  
XII Conditions and the order for ceasing the Party’s existence

Art. 34 Party ceases to exist in the case of:

1. decision to unite or to join other party;
2. decision to split on two or more parties
3. decision to stop party’s existence
4. with court decision for the cease of existence of the Party which came to power or in the case of the decision of its unconstitutionality

Art. 35. Decisions in accordance with the Art. 34 par. 1, 2 and 3 are under the responsibility of the National Council, and can be brought with at least 2/3 of all elected delegates. This right cannot be given to the other organ of the Party.

Transitory and final regulations

§ 1. In the cases when this Statute does not foresee the qualified majority, the decisions of the concrete organ can be brought with the usual majority (at least half of the members plus one member).

§ 2. Every member of the forum (National Council, Central Council, Consultative

Council, Municipal Assembly and Municipal Board) has the right to vote once for a concrete decision.

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Interested contributors may deal with any topic focusing on the political, economic, historical, social or cultural aspects of a specific country or region covered by PECOB.

Potential contributors must submit a short abstract (200-300 words) and the full text, which can be in English as well as in any other language from the countries covered by PECOB.

Upcoming deadlines for submitting proposals are:

**January 31<sup>st</sup>**

**June 30<sup>th</sup>**

**November 30<sup>th</sup>**

All texts must comply with PECOB Submission Guidelines ([www.pecob.eu](http://www.pecob.eu)).

All proposals, texts and questions should be submitted to

**Ms Luciana Moretti**

**[luciana.moretti@unibo.it](mailto:luciana.moretti@unibo.it)**



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