

Use of anti-European and anti Euro-Atlantic rhetoric by Bulgarian ultranationalist party “Attack” in the parliamentary pre-election campaign of Republic of Bulgaria in 2005

This article is devoted to the use by some political forces of the Republic of Bulgaria anti-NA-TO and anti-European sentiments in the Bulgarian society in the early 2000's thousands of years. Such sentiments were able to use ultranationalistic coalition “Ataka” in 2005, formed mainly from the nationalist parties, which allowed her to get into the Parliament – the national Assembly. Listed on the peculiarities of the formation of this political force on the Bulgarian background of alienation of citizens from political parties, distrust in the political class.

Keywords: Republic of Bulgaria, coalition “Attack”, elections, party’s program, European integration, anti-European and anti Euro-Atlantic rhetoric, protest vote.

Використання антиєвропейської та антиєвроатлантичної риторики ультра націоналістичною партією “Атака” у парламентській передвиборчій кампанії Республіки Болгарія 2005 р.

Стаття присвячена питанням використання деякими політичними силами Республіки Болгарія антинативських та антиєвропейських настроїв у болгарському суспільстві на початку 2000 років. Саме такими настроями вдалося скористатися ультра націоналістичній коаліції “Атака” у 2005 р., сформованій переважно з націоналістичних партій, що дозволило їй потрапити до парламенту країни – Народних зборів. Вказано на особливості формування даної політичної сили на фоні відчуження болгарських громадян від політичних партій країни, недовіри до політичного класу.

Ключові слова: Республіка Болгарія, коаліція “Атака”, парламентські вибори, програма партій, європейська інтеграція, антиєвропейська та антинативська риторика, протестне голосування.

On 25 June, 2005, the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria brought a lot of surprises, but one of the most unexpected results was that the newly formed coalition "Attack" consisted of nationalistic formations and parties took four stages in the elections. During the first press-conferences after elections, other political forces, so-called the National Assembly, which had also got into new parliament of Republic of Bulgaria, stated that they wouldn't invite Attack's representatives for consultation on the creation of government¹. Since when the election results were announced, experts' opinions about unexpected result of political formations "Attack" were not subsiding. Let's consider that it is reasonable to examine what this formation really is, if this situation can be singular or natural phenomenon in Bulgarian political life.

Analysts estimated "Attack's" success, which has gained great people's support because of its left radicalism, as singular kind of protest election. People, in general, voted emotionally. In such way support, which "Attack" gained, can be explained. "when in great variety of different party and political statements, cannot be find that position, which is closer to you, then as a rule, you or deny to vote, either choose that at least similar with already existed and traditional thing", – political scientist Igov explained². "It's normal, and it's even can be called as European phenomenon", – sociologist Kolev commented on so-called "Attack" achievement³. Such parties have already existed in Austria, Netherlands and France. "In my opinion, appearing of this occurrence hasn't been surprising, and it's not singular phenomenon, which is appearing at first time. Remember such democratic countries as France and Austria, which have also collided with such problems. The problem isn't in appearing of coalition the "Attack", but in keeping an eye on our solving this problem", – Igov thinks⁴. That's why the "Attack" shouldn't be considered as something exotic in the world practice.

No doubt, market economy, modern market society, all these are very effective, but on the other hand, it is the cruel society, which throws a lot of people on the side of life. There are a lot of marginal people, who, eventually, find similar people to themselves, and to some extent, denying society and the political elite as a whole. This is new stratum of Bulgarian society, which with the process of European integration of the country and its modernization remains a loser", – the sociologist Gilibov considered. In other words – it is various separate social groups and subgroups, consolidation of which can be possible only for short time and only thanks to such radical things. In such situation political support of the "Attack" is unstable and the first signs of «normality» by the party will ruin support and trust to it.

¹ Martunov K. Koaliciya za Bolgariyu nachinaet konsultacii po formirovaniyu pravitelstva [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/2906_BSP_konsult

² Tcvetkova R. Itogi parlamentskih vyborov i evropeiskoe budusczee Bolgarii [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/2806_itogi_izbori.htm

³ Obretenova T., Martunov K., Tcvetkova R., Mancheva G. "Ataka" – fenomen ili zakonomernoe yavlenie v bolgarskoi politicheskoi zhizni? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/0507_ataka.htm

⁴ Tcvetkova R. Itogi parlamentskih vyborov i evropeiskoe budusczee Bolgarii [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/2806_itogi_izbori.htm

“Attack” coalition consists of 5 parties: party of the same name the “Attack” led by journalist Volen Siderov, the Union of Patriotic Forces and Militaries of the Reserve Defense, the National Movement for the Salvation of the Fatherland, the Bulgarian National Patriotic Party, Political circles “Zora”.

In pre-election program “Attack” announced its main purpose, with what has gained about 400 thousand voter’s votes, but at the same time has shocked other part of Bulgarian political class and society. Among the priorities of its election program were: immediate withdrawal of Bulgarian troops from Iraq; country’s coming out from NATO; stopping the sale of farmland to foreigners; revision of already closed chapters of negotiations with the EU and new discussing of unprofitable conditions for Bulgaria; to stop Bulgarian dependence on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; revision of already concluded privatization agreements; cancellation of agreement about closure APP the «Kozloduy» and so on.

“Attack” coalition – isn’t unexpected phenomenon or just an idea, it was appeared to meet the need of patriotism and patriotic ideas in the Bulgarian political life” – head of the Union of Patriotic Forces and Militaries of the Reserve Defense, faction’s “Attack” deputy in the Parliament 2005, Ph.D. Velichkov remarked. “Because of our limited financial possibilities – he explained – we were late with the appearance to the voters, but we knew what their reaction would be⁵.

“Attack’s” appearance became a surprise for all Bulgarian political society. Radical demands that coalition nominated impress so much. In the pre-election program said that the coalition stands for equality before the law. In the presented political platform stated the following: it is necessary to take tough measures to prevent crime, providing order and safety of citizens. Moreover, large and obviously illegal privatization should be reviewed and bring the guilty to criminal charges. It was done in a number of Eastern European countries and gave good results. The program also put the question of the confiscation of illegally bought property and assets, especially in politics. Bulgarian politicians – are the richest politicians in Eastern Europe, and how they got rich – must respond justice, says the program. We stand up – continued J. Velychkov – for cancellation all of unprofitable for Bulgaria agreements with the EU, such as decommissioning power units 3 and 4 of NPP «Kozloduy». Our coalition is against deployment of military bases in the country. We are strongly against the sale Bulgarian lands to the foreigners. As we have information, that this process is carried out intentionally, and is financed and managed outside⁶.

⁵ Obretenova T., Martunov K., Tsvetkova R., Mancheva G. “Ataka” – fenomen ili zakonomernoe yavlenie v bolgarskoi politicheskoi zhizni? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/0507_ataka.htm

⁶ Obretenova T., Martunov K., Cvetkova R., Mancheva G. “Ataka” – fenomen ili zakonomernoe yavlenie v bolgarskoi politicheskoi zhizni? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/0507_ataka.htm

“Country spends half a billion Euros annually for the maintenance such contingent, and at the same time cannot allocate tens of thousands to save patients’ life here in Bulgaria – J. Velychkov explains the demand of withdraw ling of Bulgarian troops from Iraq.

Members of the Coalition “Attack” also stand up for establishing of majority-proportional system and the legal possibility to withdraw those who don’t officiate. In Parliament we will require a reduction of staff, recourse’s restriction, which deputies consume: for petrol, airline tickets, traveling abroad, wealthy levees. Why poor Bulgaria should suffer from it and its people should pay for all this? In my opinion these requirements can’t become the basis for announcement us as “fascists”, “neo-fascists”, even “nationalists” – says Velychkov. He is sure that if the election were held again, the result for the “Attack” would be even more appreciable. We are not extreme-left politicians and we can’t be ultra right one. Our formation is the patriotic one. Politicians have confronted with each other already 15 years. Our coalition, although supports all reasonable ideas and draft law, and will stand up against any bills, documents and government actions that would not meet national interests. Society needs to be assured of necessity in existence of a political formation like ours. There hasn’t been even constructive opposition for last 4 years. We won’t try to use the tribune of parliament as a brawlers, but to create constructive, very objective and very profitable opposition – says Velychkov.

As for Bulgaria’s membership in the EU, the coalition does not mind, but “Attack” requires that Bulgarian interests should be defended. Will this order of things obstacle for European future of Bulgaria? The reason for the possible postponement of membership of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU German Chancellor G. Schroeder called: Euroscpticism is not inside the EU – it is appreciable in Bulgaria. Such parties as “Attack”, playing on nationalist ideas – a open opponents of the EU. All major Bulgarian parties without exception are on the EU map, and postponing EU membership would lead to severe loss of trust in the Bulgarian voters and extremely raise position of such parties as “Attack”, which is not very desirable partner for the European political leaders”⁷.

Because of election in Bulgaria, the fact that coalition “Attack” belonged to parliament attracted foreign mass-media. In all articles, dedicated to election, its authors reminded that Bulgaria – is the only one country in the Balkans, which during the transitional period managed to keep ethnic peace. Here’s what the newspaper «Neue Zürich Zeitung» is writing, New factor that disturbs the Bulgarian political society – is 8.93% of the voter’s⁸ votes, or 21 seats in parliament, which received the nationalist coalition “Attack”⁹. Bulgarians were worried whether the existence of such a political formations like “Attack” in NZ threatened ethnic peace and

⁷ Markov A. Bolgaria hvana posledniyat vlak za Evropa [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <http://www.komentari.com/web/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=422>

⁸ CIK obyavila oficialnye rezultaty parlamentskih vyborov v Bolgarii [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/News/2906_B5.htm

⁹ Martunov K. Chto pisali mirovye SMI na nedele o proshedshih v Bolgarii parlamentskih vyborah [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/0107_SMI_izbori.htm

whether EU countries should be upset of it. The Bulgarians – are quite tolerant people, so they always managed to keep ethnic peace. There has always been represented some ethnic Turkish party in the Bulgarian parliament, in particular, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), some right and left parties with representatives of ethnic minorities, including Roma. So the dangers of ethnic peace can't be affirmed with "Attacks" appearance.

Before parliamentary elections in 2005 in Bulgaria no one thought of "Attack" as a serious player on the political scene¹⁰. It is referred to the number of such parties as the «New Era», «Euroroma» that could pass the threshold, with a small probability. It happened quite differently. «New Era» and «Euroroma» didn't exceed 4% of the votes (2.95% – «New Era», 1.25% – «Euroroma»), "Attack" passed this threshold, taking 4th place among the parties on the elections. 400 thousand of Bulgarians who voted for the coalition "Attack" were not the fascists, they realized that until now they were not represented in previous governments – said V. Syderov, the leader of the coalition¹¹. In particular, the 30-year-old Valentin Ivanov from Sofia, who voted for the coalition "Attack", despite the fact that it propagandized not only patriotic slogans, but nationalist one, explained their choice as follows: "Fear of some people that "Attack" will turn into a radical-nationalist party is without a sound basis. This is impossible, because we support the European values of freedom and democracy, and we do not tolerate extreme manifestations related to anyone in the country. But if we defend national interests better, we will be respected among other European countries"¹².

Analyzing "Attacks" perspectives in the newly elected parliament, political analysts pointed to little chance of members of the ultra-nationalist formations to be part of the new government. They offered different versions of the coalition, which mainly didn't involve the participation of "Attack" in the coalition and the Cabinet of Ministers respectively. One of the versions of formation of new government is: Stanishev-Dogan will betray the country and unite with the "Attack", in other words there will be no fights with other parties (BSP + PSD + "Attack" – a parliamentary majority¹³), and opposition will become weak. This version had only negative effect for foreign policy. More realistic version was further loss of the electorate "Attacks" and inner-party's split. In support of these words, evidence of internal contradictions "Attack" after the election can be given. Parliamentary Group "Attack" set a record for speed split. A month after the elections part of deputies of the parliamentary group "Attack" has broken away from it, explaining it that they don't perceive the policy of group leaders, although there was different opinion about this in the parliament, that it is an attempt of a number of deputies of the

¹⁰ Bozhylov D. Posledno (seriozno) predizborno pochistvane na miselta [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <http://www.komentari.com/web/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=421>

¹¹ 400 tisyach bolgar, progolosovavshih za koalitsiyu "Ataka", ne yavlyayutsya fashistami, zaiavil ee lider Volen Siderov [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/News/B-22+26.06.htm

¹² Mancheva G. "Vybory 2005": "Pochemu ya gosoloval?" – anketa s grazhdanami Sofii [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_Russian/Theme_Monitor/Material/2906_anketa_glasuvane.htm

¹³ Bozhylov D. Klopkata za Stanishev [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <http://www.komentari.com/web/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=425>

“Attack” to move to another camp¹⁴. But, as following events had showed, “Attack” was not included in the coalition, but it didn’t collapse completely. This ultra-nationalistic party could remain a member of the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria in the future. It has retained an office in the country’s parliament after the next parliamentary elections. Its electorate continues to be based on slogans against Europe and NATO.

Thus, the parliamentary elections June 25, 2005 showed the growing alienation of Bulgarian citizens from political parties, and the system of political representation, which has been formed in recent years. Voter’s votes were singular distrust to political class. The most striking example of this tendency was the success of the new ultra party “Attack”. This party has become so popular not because of their nationalist slogans, but because of a protest concerning the behavior of the political elite in the transitional years and its inability to work for the interests of Bulgarian society. It is also important that the main motive formation’s supporter is anti-capitalist, anti-European and anti-NATO responses. Statement that privatization is unfair means that privatization is a bad thing. The idea that the state is plundered means that the existence of capitalists who is robbing it can’t be admitted.

¹⁴ Stoyanov V. “Ataka” se razpada // 168 chasa. – № 29. – 2005. – 22 – 28 yuli. – P. 9