

Members of European Parliament warn:

Ataka threatens the foundations of liberal democracy

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he political fashion of the day is the Ataka party. MPs, party leaders and journalists are in a search for a way to reduce the attacking threat. What are their arguments? The Ataka representatives are populists, they say, extremists who threaten the status quo, make empty promises and rock the government boat, which is heading to the harbour of the European Union. This is the usual argument against Ataka: they are harmful because they are in the way of Bulgaria's EU accession. The fact that Ataka's views threaten the value systems of liberal democracy and are in their essence fascist is hardly ever mentioned in Bulgaria. No one is talking about the fact that in the 17th year of the democratic changes in Bulgaria, there is a vast number of people who have no objection to embracing fascism as their main credo. It seems that our politicians and their strategies hold that if the name of the disease is not said out loud, it may be more easily dealt with.

In Europe, apparently, there is a different view on the issue. Many people in Europe think that fascism is not a political opponent like the others. And in contrast to domestic analysts who coined the term "anti-system" party, so they don't have to admit that we are dealing with a new kind of homegrown fascism, five prominent members of the European Parliament (among whom Els de Groen, well known for her activity in the field of protection of Roma rights, rights of the child, and people with mental disorders; Geoffrey Van Orden, European Parliament Rapporteur for Bulgaria; Eric Meijer and Alexander Lambsdorf, rapporteurs for EP political fractions; and prominent socialist Michael Kashman) call the things by their real names. They wrote a "Declaration for Protection of the People in Bulgaria from Neo-totalitarianism" and started gathering support for it. If by June this year the declaration is supported by half the members of the European Parliament, it will become an official statement of the legislative institution of the European Union. If it does not, it will represent the opinion solely of the people who have signed it.

The important thing here is not the number of signatures the declaration will get, but the approach to the problem. What is the threat to Bulgaria, according to the five MEPs? Populism, extremism, nationalism, the rejection of the European Union? It is none of these. The biggest threat to the Bulgarian people, according to the five MEPs, is the agitation against Turks, Roma and Jews (which today has become a daily routine for the *Ataka* newspaper and the SKAT TV station), the denial of the Holocaust (we only need to read what Ataka leader Volen Siderov has written in his books *The Boomerang of Evil* about "the Holocaust deception"), and in the appeals to go back to totalitarian methods of rule (what is meant here probably is the so called „Nationalisation Bill"). "Considerable danger" for all Bulgarians, according to the five MEPs, lies also in "the denial that people are equal" and the "appeal for discrimination" against vast groups of Bulgarian society. In other words, the five MPs fear for the future of the values of the Bulgarian state, and are worried that there is a process of destruction of the liberal basis of modern democracy in Bulgaria.

What can be done against the erosion? Could the way be the condemnation of the notion that Ataka are "bad because they threaten Bulgaria's EU accession"? No. The five MEPs propose that "normal" Bulgarian politicians stop the concealment and call the disease by its real name. Politicians must say in public that they are not against their political opponent Ataka but against the views that make the existence of Ataka possible. The five MEPs are also worried about what has not been done in Bulgaria. A country that accepts the values of the European Union but does nothing so that these values will be accepted by young Bulgarians. The five MEPs suggest that our political elite starts dealing with the issue. And finally, to apply our own laws by showing that hate speech is intolerable.

The declaration by the five has the goal of reminding the Bulgarian elite what must be done. It is a signal, a red light. If our politicians fail to see it now, they will have only themselves to blame later. But by then it will be too late...■

Emil COHEN

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

WRITTEN DECLARATION

Pursuant to Rule 116 of its Rules of Procedure

by MEP Els de Groen Greens/EFA group

MEP Michael Cashman PES group

MEP Erik Meijer GUE/NGL group

MEP Alexander Graf Lambsdorff ALDE group

MEP Geoffrey Van Orden EPP/ED group

Written declaration on protection of people in Bulgaria against neo-totalitarianism

The European Parliament

- Having regard to Rule 116 of its Rules of procedures;

- Having regard to its numerous resolutions condemning fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, denial of the Holocaust and the resolution on the situation of Roma in Europe;

A. Whereas it is expected that in 2007 Bulgaria will be a member state of the European Union;

B. Whereas successive Bulgarian Governments have confirmed the democratic and tolerant nature of the political system;

C. Whereas there are political forces functioning inside Bulgaria whose leaders preach hatred to minorities and especially to Jews, Roma and Turks, deny the Holocaust and call for returning to totalitarian methods of state governance;

D. Whereas that propaganda presents a

considerable threat to many Bulgarian citizens because it promotes a denial of the equality of all human beings and the expulsion or discrimination of groups which they want to be their victims;

1. Calls on all democratic parties of Bulgaria to condemn such views and political methods and provide citizens with information related to the danger of new totalitarianism as well as to take measures for continuing education of youth in a spirit of tolerance and respect of democratic values and rights of minorities;

2. Invites the Bulgarian judiciary to enforce the measures provided in its national legislation to prevent hate speech, intolerance and discrimination;

3. Instructs the President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council, the Commission and the Governments of member states.

Signatures:

MEP Els de Groen Greens/EFA group

MEP Michael Cashman PES group

MEP Erik Meijer GUE/NGL group

MEP Alexander Graf Lambsdorff ALDE group

MEP Geoffrey Van Orden EPP/ED group