

## ***Memorandum***

### ***The Trabant of Solomon Passy on the Way to NATO***

Historical data describes the Trabant as an automobile that was produced from 1957 to 1990 by former East German auto maker VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke Zwickau in Zwickau, Saxony. It is often regarded as a symbol of the defunct East Germany, and of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in general. The car was known for being uncomfortable, slow, noisy, and dirty.

However, some 1,700 km. from East Germany, one such Trabant rather surprisingly on first sight, became a symbol of the irreversible Euro-Atlantic future of another country in Eastern Europe – Bulgaria. In 1989 the Trabant owned by the future Grand National Assembly MP and later Minister of Foreign Affairs Solomon Passy started its way west and did not stop for the next 27 years.

In March 1989, after the dissident artist Simon Varsano was shot non-fatally by Militsiya officers, Solomon Passy and the future President of democratic Bulgaria Zhelyu Zhelev were the first non-official and therefore impartial investigators of the shooting. They arrived at the crime scene namely with the Trabant.

In spite of this and a few other similar events, the true pathfinding role of the Trabant started in August 1990 after the plea of Solomon Passy before the Grand National Assembly for Bulgaria to leave the Warsaw Pact and join NATO. In the second half of 1990 and the first months of 1991 the Trabant or Trabby drove a number of oppositionist leaders and

thinkers all over Bulgaria and in this way indirectly helped the creation of the Union of Democratic Forces and the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria.

The Trabant rose to international fame on 13 June 1991 when Solomon Passy used it to “kidnap” the Secretary-General of NATO Manfred Wörner – an act that was shown on CNN and Bulgarian media. In this way it became a tradition for the Trabby to transport a number of political and religious leaders who visited Bulgaria in subsequent years.

4 October 1991 – Dalai Lama in Sofia (Имате снимка с началника на кабинета му пред Трабанта, но доколко важна роля е играл Траби тук)?

On 25 May 1996, during his first visit to Bulgaria after his exile in 1946, the Bulgarian King Simeon II rode in the Trabant.

On June 24 2001, just after the newly-elected government of King Simeon II has sworn in, Solomon Passy drove for the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry in his Trabant.

In February 2002 Lord George Robertson became the second Secretary-General of NATO who rode in the Trabant after Manfred Wörner.

During his visit to Bulgaria on 16-17 May 2002, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Walter Schwimmer arrived at the Bulgarian Parliament in the Trabant.

On 23-26 May 2002 Pope John Paul II visited Bulgaria and blessed the Trabant – bringer of Euro-Atlantic ideas in Bulgaria.

On 20 November 2002 Foreign Minister Solomon Passy arrived at the Sofia airport in the Trabant before his departure for NATO Prague Summit, where Bulgaria and six other countries in Eastern Europe were invited to begin accession talks with the Alliance.

In April 2009 Jaap de Hoop Scheffer became the third NATO Secretary-General who rode in the Trabant.

On 16 September 2015, after its successful 25-year-long Euro-Atlantic mission the Trabant was donated by Dr. Solomon Passy to the National Museum of Military History commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organized Pro-Atlantic movement in New Europe.

In 2018 a replica of the Trabant will be exhibited at the recently constructed NATO Museum as a recognition to the role of the Trabant for the Bulgarian accession to the Alliance.