

Memorandum
(The Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, ACB)
NATO's Big Bang Trabi

1. “Kidnapping” NATO SG Manfred Wörner

The Atlantic Trabant first rose to international fame when it was promoted by CNN on 13 June 1991. On this day, Dr. Solomon Passy (Founder & President of the ACB, later the Foreign Minister who negotiated Bulgaria's membership in NATO) used it to “kidnap” the Secretary-General of NATO Manfred Wörner during the first visit of a NATO SG to Bulgaria. This episode was a powerful expression of NATO's support for Eastern Europe's aspiration to reunite with the Euro-Atlantic world. It triggered a tradition for the Atlantic Trabant (or “Trabi”) to become the preferred vehicle for a number of VIPs visiting Bulgaria.

In November 1990, on invitation of NATO SG Manfred Wörner and US Permanent Representative to NATO Ambassador William Taft IV, Dr. Passy led the first ever parliamentary delegation from the Warsaw Pact to visit NATO HQ. During this visit, the hosts blessed the Bulgarian idea to establish the first pro-Atlantic NGO outside of NATO. This was the first documented moment of the birth of the Atlantic movement in New Europe, and Trabi became the official car of the ACB.

Further boost of Atlantic movement in the New Europe was encouraged in a joint declaration of Secretary of State James Baker and German MFA Hans Dietrich Genscher, on 10 May 1991.

2. Retire with honor

On 16 September 2015, after its successful 31-year-long Euro-Atlantic mission, Trabi was donated by Dr. Solomon Passy to the National Museum of Military History in Sofia, thus commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the organized Atlantic movement in New Europe.

3. Trabi's CV: 1984 – 2015

The true political performance of Trabi 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 October 1991, Trabi welcomed the delegation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, in Sofia.

In March 1995, Gen. George Joulwan, SACEUR, delivered a speech at the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria and became the first military commander passenger of Trabi.

In May 1996, during his first visit to Bulgaria, after 50 years in exile, King Simeon II became the first royal passenger of Trabi.

February 2002: Lord George Robertson, Secretary-General of NATO.

May 2002: Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

May 2004: Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary-General of NATO.

On 23 – 26 May 2002, Pope John Paul II visited Bulgaria and blessed the Trabant.

But even in Communist Bulgaria Trabi was the vehicle of democratization. In March 1989, after the anti-communist dissident photographer Simon Varsano was shot and wounded by Militia officers, Solomon Passy and the future President of democratic Bulgaria Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev made a clandestine investigation of the shooting site, while riding the Trabi.

4. Historical Data and Legacy for Bulgaria

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 economic collapse of the Eastern Bloc in general. The car is produced from cardboard, not sheets of steel. In German, “trabant” means satellite. So, Trabi was the real satellite, or life companion, in Bulgaria's journey from the Warsaw Pact to NATO's Big Bang in 2004.

5. The Trabant in NATO HQ

In November 2019, a replica of the Atlantic Trabant was donated to NATO from Dr. Solomon Passy. The replica was sent to Brussels after a farewell ceremony at the Sofia National Museum of Military History, during which the team of The Atlantic Club of Bulgaria took goodbye with the Trabant. The car was then placed at NATO HQ as part of an art project on the occasion of the 15th anniversary from the membership of Bulgaria in NATO and the 70th anniversary from the foundation of the Alliance.

Photos:



001.

Manfred Woerner, 13 June 1991, photo: Ivan Salabashev

Манфред Вьорнер, 13 юни 1991, снимка: Иван Салабашев



002.

25 May 1996, King Simeon II during his first visit to Bulgaria

25 май 1996, цар Симеон II по време на неговата първа визита в България



003.

24 July 2001, Minister Passy departs for the Bulgarian MFA Building after the government took office

24 юли 2001, след като правителството се е заклело, Соломон Паси потегля към МВНР



004.

17 September 1991, Solomon Passy with Dalai Lama's Chief of Cabinet

17 септември 1991, Соломон Паси с шефа на кабинета на Далай Лама



28 February 2002, NATO SG Lord George Robertson (1999-2004) in Sofia and Foreign Minister Solomon Passy

28 Февруари 2002, генералният секретар на НАТО лорд Джордж Робъртсън (1999-2004) и външният министър Соломон Паси



006.

24 May 2002, Pope John Paul II gives his blessing to the Trabant

24 май 2002, Папа Йоан Павел II благославя Трабанта



007.

Sofia, 24 May 2002, Papamobile of John Paul II and Passymobile the Trabant of Minister Passy in front of National Palace of Culture

София, 24 май 2002, Папамобилът на папа Йоан Павел Втори и Пасимобилът – Трабантът на Соломон Паси пред сградата на НДК



008. – 009.

20 November 2002, Minister Passy arrives at Sofia Airport before his departure for NATO Prague Summit

20 ноември 2002, Министър Соломон Паси пристига на летище София преди заминаването си за срещата на върха на НАТО в Прага



010. – 011.

26 May 2003, Elfie Woerner (Manfred Woerner's widow) and Matthias Kleinert (Director of the Department of Politics and External Relations of Daimler-Chrysler) with the Trabant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

26 май 2003, Елфи Вьорнер (вдовицата на Манфред Вьорнер) и Матиас Клайнерт (директор на Департамента по политически и външни отношения на Даймлер-Крайслер) с Трабанта, МВнР



012.

13 May 2004, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO SG (2004-2009), in Sofia

13 май 2004, Яп де Хоп Схефер, генерален секретар на НАТО (2004-2009), в София



013

16 September 2016, Solomon Passy & US Chargé d'affaires Roderick Moore with the Trabant, during its donation to the National Museum of Military History in Sofia. H.E. Rod Moore assisted the birth of ACB in 1990 and in 1991 coordinated the visit of Manfred Woerner in Sofia.

16 септември 2015, Соломон Паси & американският Шарже д'афер Родерик Мур с Трабанта по време на дарението му на Националния военноисторически музей в София. Н.Пр. Род Мур помага за създаването на АКБ през 1990 и координира визитата на Манфред Вьорнер в София през 1991.



014.



015.



016.

014-016

16 September 2015, King Simeon II, Assoc. Prof. Sonya Penkova, Director of the National Museum of Military History, Dr. Solomon Passy and Members of the Diplomatic Corps with the Trabant during its donation to the National Museum of Military History in Sofia.

16 септември 2015, цар Симеон II, доц. Соня Пенкова, директор на Националния военноисторически музей в София, д-р Соломон Паси и членове на Дипломатическия корпус с Трабанта по време на дарението му на Националния военноисторически музей в София.



017.



018.

017 – 018.

11 November 2019, The send-off of the Replica of the Euro-Atlantic Trabant to NATO HQ
11 ноември 2019, Изпращането на репликата на Евро-атлантическия Трабант към Главната квартира на НАТО.



019.



020.

019 – 020.

14 November 2019, The replica of the Euro-Atlantic Trabant in NATO HQ.

14 ноември 2019, Репликата на Евро-атлантическия трабант в Главната квартира на НАТО.

Videos

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMAY70gsYCY>
Dr. Solomon Passy calls for the accession of Bulgaria to NATO during the 16th Session of the Bulgarian Grand National Assembly / 8 August 1990.
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_YS54HD_t0
Solomon Passy takes NATO SG Manfred Wörner for a ride in his Trabant
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIjpu1F3rMo>
Bulgaria joins NATO, 2 April 2004 – Raising of the Bulgarian flag in NATO HQ
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkx8ZgTpLH4>
25 April 2005 – Bulgaria signs EU Accession Treaty, Luxembourg
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yuks6FkzPrk>
10 Years Bulgaria in NATO – Movie of the Bulgarian Journalist Irina Tsoneva
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TH-KIS-snKk>
Unity Is Our Force #WeAreNATO
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7L-6PIMXMc>
NATO at 70 #WeAreNATO
8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2xVZa4pZYs>
Do you know what peace is? #WeAreNATO