



АТЛАНТИЧЕСКИЯТ КЛУБ В БЪЛГАРИЯ

THE ATLANTIC CLUB OF BULGARIA

ADDRESS

By **Dr. Solomon Passy**

Founding President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria (2001-2005)

To Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia

On the Occasion of the Final Conference on “Strengthening the Youth Dialogue for Democracy Promotion in the Light of Euro-Atlantic Integration”, Skopje, December 13th, 2017

Dear President Ramadani:

Dear Atlantic Brothers:

I am so excited to convey my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia.

You, the Macedonian Atlantic community, are doing an impressive job, third decade now — to keep the hope, the dreams and lights in the tunnel vibrant and alive even when forces, policies and circumstances tried to shut them down. May I start with one promise: at the end of the day you will see your dreams becoming true!

I still keep vivid memories from January 1993. Just a year after Bulgaria recognized the young Macedonian state the founding fathers of ACB visited Skopje to share our short experience and our endless optimism in pursuing the Euro-Atlantic dream.

We met a warm unforgettable welcome by an impressive group of pro-West enthusiasts. We were hoping that Bulgaria and Macedonia were destined to join NATO almost simultaneously and very soon. We were wrong...

Younger generations may be curious about the beginnings of our exciting Atlantic journey. In Bulgaria, this project was launched in the summer of 1990 by a handful of members of the Grand National Assembly — pioneering for the whole Europe — who called for NATO and EU membership in parallel with the immediate dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, WP. As a result a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation was the first from then Eastern Europe to visit NATO HQ and to raise with NATO SG Manfred Wörner the issue of NATO enlargement eastward. There and then we decided the foundation of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria – the first and only pro-Atlantic NGO ever operating on the WP territory. In October 1992 ACB broke the taboos and joined ATA as the first one from a non-Member State.

Today, ACB is devoted to reforming the Euro-Atlantic world. However, until 2007 — when we joined EU — ACB has always been part of Bulgaria's integration in the Western world.

Following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, NATO has been extending a friendly hand to the East at regular five-year cycle: 1994 — Partnership for Peace, 1999 — accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, 2004 — the *BIG BANG* including Bulgaria and 6 more newcomers, 2009 — Albania and Croatia. We had hoped 2014 would continue the course of further and substantial expansions of NATO, all the more that there were well-prepared candidates like Macedonia which were still in the waiting room, or Georgia, Kosovo and Serbia which would have very special place in further NATO's enlargement, along with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Regrettably – and this is a major mistake of our Alliance – it did not happen and the only new — indeed very valuable — member since 2009 is Montenegro which joined the Alliance in 2017, transforming the Adriatic Sea into an Atlantic one.

Between 1990 and 2004 when I had the privilege to raise our national flag over NATO's HQ in Brussels, Bulgaria had three major global tests to pass:

- 1990/91 — our accession to the coalition of willing led by President Bush which liberated Kuwait from Saddam's occupation,
- 1999 — our constructive role during the Kosovo crisis,
- after 9/11 2001 — our policy of de facto member of NATO and ally of the US.

We successfully passed all these tests and naturally joined NATO.

We know that Macedonia has passed all of her tests and needs no more exams. I know this from inside. In 2007 I assumed one-year-long assignment as an advisor to the Macedonian Government on NATO accession. The 1€ contract was successfully fulfilled in 2008 when the Bucharest Summit of NATO de facto approved your accession under the condition to resolve the dispute with Greece. I hope this to be materialized in the near future and my legacy to the current Government in Skopje is to speed it at max so that I receive my precious 1€. Please, consider it in your 2018 state budget and be sure that the Bulgarian EU Presidency will be very helpful in this regard so that Bulgaria might be among the first to ratify your membership in NATO.

In the meantime we hope to witness more Atlantic manifestations in Macedonia and for sure an ATA General Assembly among them.

With very best wishes to all members of the Euro-Atlantic Council and community of Macedonia, to the Macedonian people, I remain

Truly Yours,

Dr. Solomon Passy

President & Founder / Atlantic Club Bulgaria

Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001-2005)

Chairman of the UN Security Council (2002, 2003)

OSCE Chairman in Office (2004)

Chairman of Parliamentary Defence / Foreign Affairs Committee and MP (1990-1991, 2001-2009)