

Bulgaria – 13 Centuries in Europe – 13 Years in the EU

Dr. Solomon Passy, Former Foreign Minister Republic Bulgaria

National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria 2020 in Hamburg

Dear Prof. Imeyer, dear Petra, dear Ambassador Shekerletova, dear Senatorin Leonhard, dear Reverent Kleist, dear Father Apostolov, dear Guests,

It is a great honor for my wife Gergana and myself to bridge today between the Black and the North Seas - as Guests of Honor and Keynote Speaker, to commemorate the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria here in Hamburg. We are honored far beyond what the distinguished audience here could expect. It is because we are being hosted by Petra and Prof. Gerd-Winand Imeyer - representing Bulgaria since 27 years now. I do not know of any other non-Bulgarian-born diplomat doing this for such a long time and in such a superb way. And we wish the Imeyers 3 more decades hard work before the well-deserved retirement. Bulgaria's National Day is excellent occasion to commemorate Bulgaria's both 13 monumental centuries in Europe, and 13 rewarding years in the EU.

Yes, we mark today 142 years of the 3rd Bulgarian State which resulted from the 1878 liberation from the Ottoman occupation. We mark also 1339 years from the creation of the first Bulgaria State to the West of Black Sea in the heart of Europe, on the Balkans, in 681 AD. However, legends say that the first Bulgarian state is as old as the first documented full solar eclipse in 22 c. BC, when ancient Bulgarians living in today's Mongolia surprised and defeated a stronger but superstitious Chinese army. This Bulgarian know-how may be precious nowadays as well.

The list of contributions to humanity which Bulgaria, her land, her sons and daughters made for 13 centuries may be longer than *Joseph und seine Brüder* of an author whom my father researched on during his entire professional life. I will draw your attention to only few of these Bulgarian achievements. I will start with the almost 70-century-old heritage of today's Bulgarian land: the golden treasure from the Varna Necropolis – **the oldest processed gold in the world** found so far. We inherited it by the Thracians and brought it to the EU thus making it a European family treasure. The treasure in the Museum is for our eyes and our dignity.

But there are Bulgarian inventions which many of you have in their pockets. The first among them is the **Bulgarian alphabet**, known also as Cyrillic — one of the three official EU alphabets today, together with the Latin and the Greek ones. May be each of us here in this hall has at least 7 Bulgarian letters somewhere in the wallet, on any €-banknote — the 4 letters for EBPO and the three for European Central Bank (ЕЦБ), located in Frankfurt. The Bulgarian alphabet is a great tool for communication of the EU with 1/4 BN people familiar with these same characters – among whom the peoples of: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia (North), Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and even Mongolia, as well as in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, not to mention the Bulgarian base on Antarctica.

The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen prioritized the protection of our European way of life and she entrusted this to the Commissioner coming from Greece — the mother of Europe. This is great. And we should go one step further, to secure the preservation the European way of life and its tools — including continued use of the BG alphabet — also on non-EU territories like Mongolia, and Kazakhstan.

In another of your pockets you have another Bulgarian invention. Look at your cell phone. It has a **computer**. You may be surprised to learn that the father of the computer - as judged by US court in 1973 - is John Atanasoff, a great son of proud Bulgarians. Interestingly enough, our pocket computers have 100,000 times more processing power than the Computer of Apollo 11, which landed on the Moon 1969.

To this “giant leap for mankind” the Bulgarian aviation engineer John Nochev contributed by inventing **the engines of the Eagle module** which brought the first two men Neil Armstrong and Edwin Buzz Aldrin on the surface of the Moon. We still do not have pocket shuttles to the Moon but I’m sure that if we combine the innovative spirits of Hamburg and Bulgaria, of the North and the Black seas, we could produce such one someday.

The third Bulgarian invention which is either in your pocket or in your handbag or is plugged in the socket next to your nightstand is **the universal USB charger for mobile phones**. See it! This is a proven achievement of BG-German political, technological and ecological cooperation. Starting in 2008 with my & Gergana’s team — with the great leadership of the then German EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen — we created this EU success story. This USB solution saves today about dozens of millions metric tons of carbon emissions and electronic waste every year. We must now impose the universal charger globally as a contribution of the European Green Deal.

For a conclusion to my story I reserved an eternal BG contribution to humanity for which my country deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. This is **the rescue of 50.000 Bulgarian Jews during WWII**, on March 10th, 1943 — the 77th anniversary of which we commemorate this week as well. Not all Bulgarian Jews were saved: my cousin who happened to be in France — not in Bulgaria — did not have this luck. If you value however, like me, 50.000 saved human lives, against the brutality of Hitler you — as Hamburg authorities and civil society — could take the leadership and nominate Bulgaria for Nobel Peace Prize. The former Bulgarian King Boris III, Archbishop Stefan, Patriarch Cyril and Parliamentarian Dimitar Peshev are no more physically with us, but there is no expiry date to recognize an act of humanity with eternal echo. Gergana and I attended the 2012 ceremony in Oslo when the EU was given the Nobel Peace Prize. And we can assure you it will be great emotion if all us here – say, in December 2021 – celebrate together BG’s Nobel Prize in Oslo and brainstorm on how to invest the 1.1 million \$ award in saving some other 1.000.000 more people from around the world. We can do this together!

I conclude looking towards the future. If Bismarck was right to call the Bulgarians “The Prussians of the Balkans” we could easily conclude that the Germans are the Bulgarians of the Baltic Sea. Our two great European nations can make great things together. We should not listen those drawing borders between people but to follow dreamers with vision to throw long bridges – be it between the Black and the Baltic Sea or between the Earth and the Moon.

Exactly as the first Bulgarians in Europe 13 centuries ago had the vision to build a human bridge between what is today Central Asia and what is today the EU. Be blessed and be happy!

May the HAMBURG—BULGARIA bridge MAKE EUROPE GREAT AGAIN!

And now: Rush for Petra’s Beans Soup!

Dr. Solomon Passy

President & Founder Atlantic Club Bulgaria

Foreign Minister in the Government of King Simeon II (2001-2005)

Signatory to NATO and EU Accession Treaties of Bulgaria

Chairman of the UN Security Council (2002, 2003)

OSCE Chairman-in-Office (2004)

Chairman of Parliamentary Defence

Foreign Affairs Committees and Member of Parliament (1990-1991, 2001-2009)

Co-Author and Signatory to the first republican Constitution of democratic Bulgaria (1990-91)