

**Speech by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Solomon Passy
at the OSCE Second Conference on Anti-Semitism**

Berlin, 28-29 April 2004

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Jewish word for Holocaust is *Shoah*, which means *catastrophe*. The Holocaust was a catastrophe and a real tragedy not only for the Jewish people, but also for all mankind. Therefore, it is a great responsibility to keep alive the memory of the victims of the Holocaust as our homage to them and as a moral lesson for the future generations and politicians. If we let this memory fade away, we would become guilty of another crime. Because the murder of memory is the surest way to repeat the same mistakes. It is our moral duty not to forget and to keep speaking about the Holocaust as a prevention of new forms of genocide. I see in this direction the purpose of our conference.

I would like to start by pointing out that the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe was created and is called upon to ensure human security, or to protect and enhance peace and human rights. This by definition commits the OSCE to fight all forms of Anti-Semitism, this ancient and depressingly persistent manifestation of discrimination and intolerance.

The Bulgarian CIO has actively supported efforts to follow up the work started at the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, held in Vienna in June last year.

We believe it must be made clear not only that we take seriously the problem of Anti-Semitism and the concerns of Jewish communities and other minorities throughout the OSCE area, but that we are striving to implement the recommendations for concrete measures, to raise public awareness and to create “zero tolerance” towards all manifestations of intolerance.

As OSCE Chairmanship and as a country, we are deeply conscious of the fact that any form of racial, social or religious intolerance and hostility towards Jews in particular strikes against the foundations of democracy. The way our

countries respond to Anti-Semitism is critical for the credibility of democracy, and indeed for the future of our countries – diverse in culture and tradition, but united by our shared values.

Someone had said that when one minority is threatened, all minorities are threatened, and when all minorities are threatened – everybody is threatened .

Therefore, careful consideration of the manifestations of Anti-Semitism can benefit societies in determining how best to respond to other forms of racism and intolerance. Indeed, the OSCE is implementing a comprehensive approach in its efforts to fight discrimination and intolerance. Two more meetings to be held later this year in Paris and Brussels are devoted to this objective.

Here and now the focus is on Anti-Semitism, and not only because its older manifestations have lately intensified. It is also because of the concern caused by the contemporary forms of Anti-Semitism. Some of these are used as doctrinal justification for violence and terrorism. Others seek to exploit the dislocations caused by globalisation. We cannot ignore the new disguises of Anti-Semitism, if we wish to come up with an effective response.

And we should probably start with education. On the one hand, bias is learned in childhood, and on the other – the sense of guilt for the crimes of the Holocaust is waning, we strongly believe that we were right to make education a priority of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the OSCE.

I would like to remind you of a Bulgarian suggestion to the Council of Europe a few years ago for a special lesson on the Holocaust on the same day and that all textbooks on history in the Member States should include a detailed chapter on the Holocaust, promoting positive examples like the ones in Bulgaria and in Denmark, while also highlighting the full horrors of that sinister chapter in the history of Europe. Such an initiative could be taken up in the OSCE framework.

By prioritising education in the whole OSCE area, we intend to focus on specific regional problems and to highlight issues of common interest. Anti-Semitism is clearly high on this agenda. Perhaps we should go further and promote specific educational programmes for fighting Anti-Semitism.

As for schools and training, I would like to quote the former French minister of education, Luc Ferry. Presenting a ten-point programme last year to deal with problems of Anti-Semitism and racism in schools, he said – and I quote:

“It is important to intervene at the slightest incident, even if it is verbal, and to let nothing of the sort pass in the schools without explanation and punishment.”

Yes, indeed, special importance has to be given to the promotion of educational programmes for combating Anti-Semitism and of education about the Holocaust and about respect for all ethnic and religious groups. Parallel to this, there should be a drive to combat hate crimes, fueled by racist, xenophobic and anti-

Semitic propaganda in the media and on the Internet. The whole media industry has a special responsibility in this respect. We are aware that neither regulation nor self-regulation can be effective without the support of civil society. And therefore we should encourage and support the efforts of NGOs in all these areas.

If left unchallenged, manifestations of intolerance become more arrogant and aggressive. Our commitment to reinforcing common efforts to combat Anti-Semitism across the OSCE region should be directed towards fostering, through our legal and administrative systems, of a safe environment, free from harassment, violence or discrimination.

The commitment to combat Anti-Semitism has to be supported by systematic and reliable information and statistics about manifestations of Anti-Semitic and hate crimes. We have to gather and process this information and make it available to the public. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has an important practical role to play in all this.

We would also like to highlight the importance of future work with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to determine appropriate ways to review periodically the problem of Anti-Semitism. Coordination between OSCE institutions and other international institutions and NGOs should be improved and enhanced.

We expect the implementation of the recommendations on the fight against Anti-Semitism, which would be an important outcome of this Conference to be further boosted by the next OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia in December.

Speaking about Anti-Semitism always brings me back to my own country. The story of the rescue of nearly 50,000 Bulgarian Jews from certain death in the hands of the Nazis during World War II has been told already. I am very proud of that part of our history. Some may feel that the story should now be consigned to the historical archives. It is, however, my firm conviction that such an approach would be totally wrong.

Among many other unfortunate developments, the recent clashes in Kosovo have convinced me that the Bulgarian example needs to be brought back to memory again and again.

Last month's events in Kosovo – just 60 kilometres from our borders – represented a depressing reminder that ethnic and religious intolerance are far from dead, even in 21st century Europe.

The Bulgarian experience – put in brief in the secret notes of the Ambassador of the Third Reich to Sofia, Adolf-Heinz Beckerle, that the deportation of Bulgarian Jews is hampered by “the mentality of the Bulgarian people, who lack the ideological strength and have no inborn prejudice against Jews” – shows that mankind is capable of doing much better than that.

It is for political leaders to set the tone, but civil society, educationists and the media have a no less important role to play in this process. That should become even clearer after these two days of work devoted to the problems of Anti-Semitism. I wish all participants every success.

Thank you for your attention!

РЕЗЕРВНИ 3 АБЗАЦА:

Going back to the tragedy of more than 60 years ago, which took the lives of six million Jews, it is our duty to look into the future and to ask ourselves: What was not done 60 years ago to save the Jewish people from genocide and are we doing today everything that is needed for averting such tragedies?

As OSCE Chairman-in-Office and as foreign minister of a state that has just joined the most powerful military and political alliance – NATO – and as a state that is on the threshold of the European Union, I am convinced that if such alliances as the OSCE, NATO and the EU existed in the 1930s, Hitlerism not only would not have flourished, but it would not have germinated even. Because Anti-Semitism is equivalent to anti-Europeanism, to anti-humanism and to anti-globalism.

The European Union, NATO and the OSCE are alliances born from the protection of the universal human values, human rights being first and foremost among them. Today these alliances constitute the most reliable protection of the democratic freedoms. This is why, I view the fifth EU enlargement with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as yet another step towards making this protection stronger. What is more, I believe that the more countries join organisations like NATO and the European Union, the less likely it would be for inter-ethnic conflicts to flare and for human rights and freedoms to be violated in the areas where these alliances have an influence. The proof is simple: there are neither ethnic conflicts nor violated human rights in the zones of NATO and the European Union. Consequently, we need to focus on the future Euro-Atlantic prospects of the entire OSCE area, including the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Mediterranean region.