



АТЛАНТИЧЕСКИЯТ КЛУБ В БЪЛГАРИЯ

THE ATLANTIC CLUB OF BULGARIA

FOUNDED ON APRIL 4, 1991 · MEMBER OF THE ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION SINCE 1992

Mr. Avner Shalev
Chairman of the Directorate of the Yad Vashem Museum
Jerusalem

June 1st 2010

RE: The awarding Liliana Panitza from Bulgaria with the title “Righteous among the Nations”

Dear Mr Shalev:

I am one of those who came to this world because Bulgaria saved 48 000 Jews during the WWII and am writing to you in that regard.

As you possibly know, Liliana Panitza from Bulgaria held the post of private secretary of the Commissar Jewish Affairs. Due to this position, she had access to the top secret documents of the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs. Ms. Panitza handed in to the Jewish leader doctor Nisim Buko Levy the content of the well known Belev–Dannecker agreement in reference to the deportation of the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia and 8600 Jews from the old territories of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. Later, in March-October 1943, she was in secret contact with the official Jewish rescue committee. She was regularly transmitting top secrets of the Commissariat to the official Jewish representatives. Due to this information, the Committee managed to mobilize the public opinion of Bulgaria in favor of the Jewish community. All this information is public and confirmed by historians.

There remains no doubt that the rescue of the Bulgarian Jewry was due, in significant part, to the activity of Liliana Panitza. And she contributed to what history is calling today the “Bulgarian miracle”.

Recently a request was presented to the Commission in charge of bestowing the title to recognize Ms. Panitza as “Righteous among the Nations.” To our great regret, the request was rejected at the end of 2008.

I do not know the exact arguments of this respectful Commission. However, the common arguments against I have met in numerous discussions in which I participated are not compelling. It usually ignored that her activity in favor of the Bulgarian Jewry seriously endangered her life. Also ignored is usually her regular and long-lasting contact with the Jewish rescue committee, which lasted about seven months during 1943 – the most crucial period of danger for the Bulgarian Jewry.

Her heroism is well known here in Bulgaria and the refusal that she be acknowledged as Righteous was rather disappointing for many of us in Bulgaria, Jews included.

Therefore, we kindly ask of you that the file of Liliana Panitza be reopened. After taking into consideration all the new facts, we are sure that Liliana will be rewarded with the title “Righteous among the Nations.” Until now from the 22 600 Righteous only 20 are Bulgarian. It is difficult to believe that these 20 people alone succeed to save the 48 000 (which mathematically means that each of these 20 Righteous Bulgarians save 2 400 Jews, average). While, in the same time countries and peoples with much more modest achievements during WWII (hundreds of times smaller than that of Bulgaria) today enjoy number of “Righteous” highly exceeding their results during the WWII. This simple calculation leaves us with the impression of a biased approach which is discriminating Bulgaria.

I believe that the final decision on this file hasn't been made yet and we leave the justice on it in your hands.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Solomon Passy
Founding President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria
Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001- 2005)
Chairman of the UN Security Council (in 2002, 2003)
OSCE Chairman in Office (2004)
Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (2005- 2009)