Distinguished guests,
Dear participants,

We are here today to mark the centennial of the birth of a man of great vision, wisdom and foresight. This special occasion affords an opportunity to look back and assess the contribution of Senator J.W. Fulbright to the fulfillment of a great idea: the strengthening of peace and understanding between people through education, knowledge and civilization. This is a perennial cause because it is hard to achieve. It is like the struggle of Good against Evil, of humanized knowledge against ignorance, prejudice and intolerance, of democracy against violence, lawlessness and terror. In other words, it is the struggle of order to surmount chaos, both within and without, on a lasting basis. The Fulbright theme has several facets: the personality and performance of J. W. Fulbright, the Fulbright idea that he initiated by proposing a bill on international academic exchange, the materialization of this idea in the Fulbright Program, the fifty-one Fulbright commissions and, last but by far not least, the Fulbright experience itself. It is unique for each and every recipient of the Fulbright award. I’d like to say a few words about each dimension of the Fulbright theme.

Senator James William Fulbright is one of the most influential politicians of the United States in the 20th century. His career developed in very dynamic times marked by fateful events of world significance: WWII, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Middle East crises etc. During the last decades of his life J.W. Fulbright...
Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

witnessed the collapse of totalitarianism and the beginning of democracy in Eastern Europe. When the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange was established in 1993, Senator Fulbright sent the following letter to the Bulgarian Fulbrighters:

"Dear Fellow Fulbrighters,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on the establishment of the newest Fulbright Commission in the world. The sentiments written into the Fulbright Act are just as valid today as they were when the first commissions opened in 1948.

The goal of our program is "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United states and the people of other countries… and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries in the world.

This historic occasion marks an important milestone in the educational relationship between the United States and Bulgaria. With your hard work and dedication to these goals, we can make the world a better and a safer place."

Former US Senator Paul Douglas describes Fulbright as "a child of the 18th century, a throwback to that age of Enlightenment, trust in reason, temperate argument and slightly aristocratic tendencies." I find nothing wrong with the ideals of the Enlightenment, despite their many critics, especially today when a temperate argument is a much better option than brutal confrontation. Regarding the Senator’s aristocratic tendencies, I can only associate them with his respect for human dignity, including respect for differences between people and cultures. As he himself states in 1989:

"One of the greatest assets on this earth is the diversity of our people and the richness of their cultures. Each of these cultures represents a unique historical development, a compilation of experience from which all the rest of us can probably learn. The forces tending to homogenize the earth’s population and to erase cultural differences are strong and urgent. But we see everywhere evidence of an equally strong and equally urgent insistence on the part of each cultural group to assert its own identity… It is altogether unrealistic – and probably undesirable as well – to aspire toward a single, universal community of humankind with common values and common institutions...The rapprochement of people is only possible when differences of culture and outlook are respected and appreciated rather than feared or condemned, when the common bond of human dignity is recognized as the essential bond for a peaceful world”.

It is a well-known fact that during his long political career* Senator Fulbright sometimes took on controversial even paradoxical positions that provoked sharp reactions among his opponents. He was at once an architect and critic of US foreign policy and always stood his ground no matter whether his views were universally accepted as right or wrong. However, Senator J. W. Fulbright won himself an undisputed place in history mainly as the author of the Bill on International Academic Exchange. The bill was unanimously approved by the US congress and on August 1, 1946, it was signed by President Harry Truman. The program was to be initially funded through disposal of US wartime properties in Europe immediately after WWII. The vita of the Fulbright idea started in a deeply divided world. Since the very beginning and until the late 1980s, i.e. until the end of the Cold War period, it worked for the preservation of peace and understanding among nations through exchange of academic and cultural values and achievements. Even then but far more today this idea has served globalization – a cultural and spiritual

*J.W. Fulbright is the longest serving chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee in the history of the American Senate – from 1959 to 1974
globalization that creates unity and harmony. Through the contributions of the United States and other countries in the world the Fulbright program has amassed an impressive intellectual capital of over a quarter of a million excellent scholars, scientists, academics, educators, artists, politicians and statesmen. They are all leaders and innovators in their respective fields. Many of them have been chosen to take crucial decisions impacting the lives of large communities and sometimes even of the whole world. Unlike other ambitious ideas, the Fulbright idea lives on and is revitalized by history. It has the capacity and potential to respond to socio-cultural priorities at any time – in the beginning it was the Cold War, then the post-totalitarian transition in the late 1980’s and today – the struggle against global terrorism.

By providing the opportunity of free movement to thousands of educated and humanized individuals, the Fulbright idea works at once for the preservation and enrichment of diverse cultural traditions and heritages because it makes them accessible. This on its part creates a basis for comparison and harmonization of the criteria of excellence in all areas. This idea cultivates civilized norms of accepting otherness in the name of global understanding and security.

The Fulbright idea is materialized through the Fulbright Program. It is implemented in 140 countries and 51 of them have bi-national commissions. The Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange was established in 1993 under a ten-year bilateral agreement between the governments of the US and the Republic of Bulgaria. After the first agreement expired, a new agreement was signed on December 3, 2003, reestablishing the Commission in perpetuity. For the last 12 years, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission has exchanged a total of 544 grantees (241 Bulgarians and 198 Americans) coming from all possible professional, scientific and artistic fields. The Fulbright award has given them a unique opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and expertise and broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons at most prestigious American and Bulgarian educational and research institutions. This number exceeds that of the grantees exchanged from the beginning of the Fulbright exchange in the late 1960’s to the establishment of the Commission in 1993. Today the Bulgarian-American Fulbright community has 726 members – 343 Bulgarians and 278 Americans. It is a valuable asset that can and should be even better utilized and invested. Among the Bulgarian and American recipients of Fulbright awards are eminent and internationally known scholars, scientists, artists and public figures. Many of them are among us today.

The Bulgarian Commission conducts an annual competition for Fulbright scholarships to complete master’s and doctoral programs, do research, lecture and teach or develop professionally at US universities, colleges, high schools and other institutions. It is guided by the general Fulbright principles of open competition, excellence, bi-nationalism and peer review. During the hard times of the transition from totalitarianism to democracy the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission supported the democratic reforms in Bulgaria through academic exchanges, conferences, summer institutes, language training, educational advising, computer testing, etc. Its contribution can be summarized as a life-changing opportunity offered to the best and most promising representatives of the Bulgarian society to test and demonstrate their abilities and achievement in the US and gain self-confidence as free and civilized individuals. The Commission works for the internationalization of Bulgarian education by raising its quality. The interest of the young Bulgarians in US education is well-known. According to recent statistics there are 3,270 Bulgarian students now studying in 49 US states. Bulgaria ranks second in Eastern Europe by the number of students in the US after Russia. It is important to know that the highest number of our students, especially those in the graduate study category, study at
top-ranking US universities – Harvard, Columbia, NYU, MIT, etc. They represent our nation in a brilliant manner with their abilities and talents, academic achievements, language proficiency and flexibility. Our young people in the US are very important ambassadors of Bulgarian culture because they change the negative stereotype of Bulgaria and create a new and positive image of our country that reflects our actual place in world civilization.

In much the same way the Commission has given a unique opportunity to hundreds of American scholars, students and teachers to immerse themselves in a new educational environment, acquire valuable knowledge about an ancient, rich and dynamic culture and contribute to the successful realization of the democratic reforms in Bulgaria and the region. I am positive that for them this has been an enhancing and extremely rewarding experience in terms of changing stereotype perceptions, making useful professional contacts and developing life-long relationships.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the Fulbright experience and the Fulbright opportunity in more general psychological terms. For me the Fulbright grantee, Bulgarian or American, resembles the culture hero in ancient myths. His or her journey to an unfamiliar reality is motivated by a strong inner need for knowledge. During this journey the Fulbrighter/hero is confronted with various hardships and trials in order to cope with chaos within and chaos without and thus ultimately gain higher knowledge about the world and him/herself. This is a kind of initiation. After the adventure is over however it is paramount that the hero should return home and share and disseminate among the members of his/her community the acquired knowledge and skills. Otherwise, his/her mission will remain unfulfilled. The Fulbright opportunity thus reminds me of the New Testament fable about the four talents. The Fulbright experience is also a unique opportunity to surmount monologism and accept dialogism as a way of communicating with others. The contact with otherness is a major instrument for getting rid of all kinds of authoritarian and official discourses, official stereotypes. It can completely deconstruct the myth of the self-sufficiency of a single world, society and its members. Considering the fact that the Fulbright program started during the Cold War period, its function of destabilizer of monologism and authoritarian discourse of total negation of the United States and activator of dialogism is of great importance. This function is still operative today because the problem of Bulgarian identity is still very closely related to acceptance of otherness and the emancipation from monologic stereotypes as a means of developing and enriching this identity.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the Bulgarian Fulbright Alumni Association for their support and ask them to continue to render their support – both moral and material – so that the Fulbright Program may continue to live and prosper.

Thank you.

BULGARIAN FULBRIGHT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM

Full name ............................................................................................................................... ...................................................
Home address ............................................................................................................................... .............................................
Field, Academic Rank and Degree ............................................................................................................................... ..............
Present Place and Address of Employment ............................................................................................................................... .....................
Phone, Fax ............................................................................................................................... ................................................
Type, Year and Duration of Grant ............................................................................................................................... ...........
Place and Name of Host Institution ............................................................................................................................... .......

Please complete and return to the Fulbright commission office address.
On April 23-29 the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange hosted the 25th conference of Fulbright Executive Directors from Europe on “Transatlantic Exchanges with an Enlarging Europe”. The official opening of the meeting on April 25 at the Sheraton Hotel in Sofia coincided with Bulgaria’s signing of the Treaty of Accession to the European Union.

Taking part in the conference were 26 Executive Directors of Fulbright Commissions, including the deputy director of the Fulbright Commission in Israel and the directors of the Fulbright programs in Russia and Ukraine. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs was represented by Tom Farrell, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Rosalind Swenson, Director of the Office of Academic Exchanges, Thomas Haran, Branch Chief, European and Eurasian Programs and Nadine Asef-Sargent, Deputy Branch Chief of European and Eurasian Programs. Participating in the conference on behalf of the Fulbright Scholarship Board and Chairman Stephen Uhlfelder was FSB member Shirley Green and FSB staff director Pat Schaefer. The cooperating agencies were also well represented: Patti McGill Peterson, Executive Director of CIES and Vice-President of IIE and her associates Ann Clift Boris and Maria Bettua, Mary Kirk Vice – President of IIE and her colleagues Arthur Austin and Theresa Granza. Among the attendees were also eight U.S. Embassy officers serving in Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Turkey and UK. There were five distinguished guest speakers from Bulgaria, Turkey and Belgium.

The conference focused on a wide variety of issues related to the well-being and future of the Fulbright program in the context of global and regional changes: diversity and recruitment of Fulbright applicants, strategies of attracting specific target groups, fund-raising, enhancing the Fulbright experience, working with alumni, obstacles to transatlantic academic mobility, strategic partnerships, Fulbright and the international market, short-term and long-term challenges, Fulbright and the Bologna process, Fulbright and EU enlargement, etc. All these issues were raised in panels, breakout sessions and plenaries provoking lively and productive discussions.

The conference elected a new executive committee of the European directors to be chaired by Maggie Nicholson, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Belgium and Luxembourg. The next conference will take place in Paris, France.

The cultural enrichment program included a guided tour of Sofia, a concert at the National Archaeological museum, a visit to the National Museum of History and one-day trip to the historic town of Plovdiv.

The 25th conference of Executive Directors of Fulbright Committee turned into another successful meeting of partners from the Euro-Atlantic community deeply committed to the goals of the Fulbright program and determined to continue to work hard for increasing its potential and impact in the face of the new political and cultural priorities and challenges.
Alongside Christianity and Judaism, Islam is one of the great monotheistic religions of the world. The contribution of the Muslim communities worldwide to the shaping of the world as it is today is undeniable. It is the dominant religion of the whole of the Arab Middle East, the countries of Nord and Nord West Africa, the former Soviet Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey. Muslims also live among us in Europe. They and their beliefs are the object of persistent media coverage day in and day out. Still, most of the Europeans find the followers of Allah and their lifestyle to be shrouded in mystery wrapped in pseudo-science. This leads to prejudice and xenophobia. As a result, Islamism and Islamic extremism, which pose a universal threat, are wrongly identified with Islam.

Islam and Europe, Islam in Europe. This is no novelty at all. As far back as 13 centuries ago, "the warriors of Allah" set foot on the continent at Gibraltar and Constantinople and they have been inhabiting parts of it ever since. The faith of Prophet Mohammad was the ideological shell of the expansion known as the Arab Conquest. Its driving force was the last great migration of Semitic peoples and history has proven that no force is capable of stopping such a colossal move. The conquerors invaded the cradle of Christianity, the North African coast and the Pyrenees, and incorporated it into the Realm of Islam. Several centuries later, the migration of Turkic peoples brought Islam from Asia Minor to the Balkans and it was not until 1683 that the Ottoman advances was stopped at the gates of Vienna. Christianity was ousted from its native land and the major areas of its dissemination in those times. The disastrous defeat generated severe implacability. Heated debate was fanned up in the ideological domain. It accompanied and urged "hot" military conflicts followed by the incessant "cold war" - Guerra freda, to quote Medieval Spanish authors. It was a tragic paradox. The followers of two similar Abrahamic religions, whose dogmas differed from one another primarily in the identity of the Word of God, were adversaries for more than a millennium. That was extremely perilous to huge communities, especially when they were close neighbors: the Realm of Islam in direct contact with the Asian and African coasts occupied "the European outlet" to the Mediterranean. The conflict was related to the rule of regions where the destiny of humankind was forged. Therefore many crucial events in the history of both the Cross and the Crescent were explained in expansionist terms and with the antagonism to "the Other": the holy war (jihad) for the Muslims and its Christian mirror image of the crusades.

For more than half a century, European nations have followed the path of political unification encouraged by their belonging to a common civilization model. Its main features are associated with the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They underlie the representative government model applied in accordance with the rules of modern democracy. The application of these rules shapes the European family and their continuous promotion and positive development ensure the strengthening and further enlargement of the European Union which the European family embodies. However, the road is strewn with many obstacles and vicissitudes. The issue of the place of Islam and its proponents in uniting Europe is singled out among them with its need for an urgent and positive solution. For sizeable parts of the Muslim community do not share the principles and values of the European architecture, while some groups firmly reject and oppose them.

After half a century of successful integration, Europe is striving to achieve its "ultimate goal", "etablir sa finalit?" (Br. Geremek), including the major task of "forming Europeans". Therefore the integration of the Muslim population into the spirit of renovation, into the values, rules, tendencies and processes of unification inherent in modern Europe becomes a conspicuous challenge. It cannot be overruled by one-off acts, powerful and coordinated as they might be. What is needed is consistent, long-term and large-scale effort.
According to the Islamic doctrine, the almost 30 million Muslims who live on the continent are part and parcel of “the community of believers”. This belonging brings them together beyond the boundaries of their ethnic, national or territorial origin. Whether this axiom is acceptable to Europeans or not is a matter of opinion. Nevertheless it is obvious that the identity and life of Muslim communities in Europe also are largely dependent on the nature and specific features of their Christian surroundings in the individual countries and regions. From this perspective, we can discern two major European regions: the Balkans and Western Europe.

**The Balkan region.** For more than six centuries now, the followers of Islam have co-existed on the peninsula with the earlier Orthodox and Catholic Christian communities and other small ethnic and religious groups. Their number is close to twelve million, almost as many as they are in Western Europe but here they account for some 15 percent of the total population. There are about three million Muslims in Albania, two million in Bosnia, three million in Serbia and Montenegro, 900 thousand in Bulgaria, 150 thousand in Greece and 70 thousand in Romania. One can distinguish four cross-border linguistic and ethnic groups. The most numerous group is that of Muslim converts who have preserved their mother tongue. These are the Albanian Muslims, the Bosnians (Bosnian) or “the Muslims” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece, the Greco-phon Wallede Muslims, etc. Due to their links to neighboring Turkey, the Turkish and Turkicized groups remaining after the removal of the Ottoman rule are also prominent. Furthermore, there are groups of diverse origins, which came to settle in Ottoman times. These are the Tartars in Dobrudja, the Cherkez and the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia, amongst others. Muslims are the most numerous among the gypsies (Roma), a community in between a tribe and an ethnic. Their total number is 2.5 to 3 million and they speak either Roma dialects or Turkish or the language of the native population in the respective country in which they live. Their marginal status generates their aspiration to develop a more stable ethnic community. Turkish-speaking and Albanian-speaking Roma tend to try to join the Turkish and the Albanian ethnic groups but the latter do not accept them. Their attempts at integration into the Christian community are also met with rejection.

The Muslim community is divided into ethnic and linguistic groups, which is an obstacle to their active cooperation and efficient unity of action. Only an infinitesimal part of those with religious education know the canonic Arabic language. The nature of their faith and rites is often very distant from either the authentic “Arab” or the intellectual “Iranian” Islam. The differences between those and “the Balkan version” are similar to the dissimilarities between Spanish Catholicism and Nordic Protestantism. The exponents of the faith in Allah in the Balkans, the Turkic people who were converted a few centuries

After the rise of Islam, “imported” some Central Asian cultural elements into its practices and they found themselves surrounded by a Christian majority, when they settled in the Balkans. The lengthy co-existence and mutual influence account for the substantial syncretism in their spiritual and cultural identities and in their lifestyle. An example of extreme syncretism can be seen in the religious life and rites of Roma Muslims. They worship both Jesus and Mohammad. They celebrate the two big Bayram holidays but also Christmas and Easter and St. George’s day most of all. They come together for prayer two or three times a week at private homes. Their chants eulogize Jesus. Their liturgical book is the Gospel rather than the Koran, which they do not recognize. Boys are circumcised and funerals follow the Muslim ritual.

The condition of Balkan Muslims is determined by the fact that the peninsula is a distinct “world” of diverse ethnic and religious groups. Its modern political map took shape in the 19th c. and at the beginning of the 20th c. in the course of the decline of the Ottoman rule. The clash between Christians and Muslims was expressed in the ugly forms of war, massacre and expulsion of the Muslim population. Violence deepened the old ethnic and religious barriers heritor from the Ottoman rule and these barriers acquired dimensions which in the large part suffice to fill the “modern” criteria of nationalism. Religious distinctions firmly prevailed in the nation-building process. A telling example is the division of the South Slavic community with all its ethnic, linguistic and even historical uniformity into three nations: Serbian, Croat and Bosnian. For more than a century and a half, they have been fighting, often with weapons, over the territories of their statehood.

The new Christian Balkan states were left with different numbers of Muslims. The latter turned from members of the smaller but privileged community in the Empire into neglected minorities. Balkan leaders tried to make their countries “break with the Orient” and to introduce the European lifestyle. Modernization processes affected Muslims’ lives and religious feelings. Muslims became increasingly alienated from their surroundings in everyday life; they enjoyed civil rights but their representation in government was limited and their economic privileges were removed. This failure to adapt to modernisation at the same rate affected their well-being; they encapsulated and clung to conservative traditions.

Until the end of the 20th c., the relations of Balkan Muslims with their Christian environment went through many vicissitudes against the background of the conflict-fraught dramatic fate of the region. At certain points in time, individual countries made sporadic attempts to overcome the political (Yugoslavia before and after World War II) and economic (Bulgaria and Romania in the 1960’s and 1970’s) differences with the Christian surroundings. Exodus waves to the Realm of Islam embodied by the Ottoman Empire and Turkey were
Dogmatic assessments of these phenomena, they are Balkans. Whatever the orthodox Christian and Muslim heritage determine the content of "everyday Christianity" which was proclaimed in the time between the two world wars, failed. The tendency to assimilate on a secular or atheistic basis in the communist countries was either very limited or superficial. The attempt at forced assimilation on the basis of the principles of atheism (the so-called "re-birth" process in Bulgaria in the 1980's and 1990's) brought about opposite effect. The total ban on religious worship in Albania proved the powerful illusion the authorities were under, that they could force religious feelings out of the hearts and minds of the populace.

The conflicts and the efforts to mitigate them are among the most salient features of the age-old co-existence of the two communities compelled to follow the imperatives of a common fate. Outbursts of conflict alternated with good-neighborness and tolerance in the contacts with the ideas, habits and rites of "the other". The inevitable mutual influence was facilitated by the fact that the barrier between Christianity and Islam was eroded by their monotheistic nature. "There is one single God and people must not be divided in their faith because of His different names", say both Orthodox Christians and Sunnites in numerous ethnographic studies and surveys. Division lines are blurred due to the nature of religious beliefs in the two communities. On a mass level, it is expressed in the faith in the transcendental absolute (God, Allah) who is sovereign and non-cognizable, merciful and severe, both distant from and close to the people. More often than not, similar monotheistic worship rituals lead even to osmosis in the areas with mixed population. Muslims and Christians share numerous sites of worship and often contribute funds or labour to build or restore churches and mosques. This osmosis can be seen in the attitude to the faith of "the other". The mandatory congratulations on the holiday are accompanied by the exchange of sacral gifts (Easter eggs or Bayram sweets). Rites of the other religion related to childbirth, weddings and funerals are attended. Joint rituals are also commonplace. Muslim women take their children together with their Christian neighbors to spend the night before Easter in monasteries. Both communities join litanies praying for rain, regardless of whether they are guided by the priest or the imam or sometimes both. These and many other facts together with the pagan heritage determine the content of "everyday Christianity" and provide the identity of "popular Islam" in the Balkans. Whatever the orthodox Christian and Muslim dogmatic assessments of these phenomena, they are obviously both the result of and instrument for spiritual engagement with people of the other faith. Hence we come to the inevitable mutual enrichment, resulting from and epitomized in the specific common cultural background and lifestyle. It determines the common features in the identity of Homo Balkanicus, "the Balkan man", who can well fit into the description of Bulgarians as Europeans "but not entirely" given by the writer Aleko Konstantinov more than a century ago.

The changes, which started in the early 1990's, affected the Balkans, including the life of Muslims. The supervision of their religious institutions by the communist regimes was eliminated. The freedoms of worship, religious education and the links with the spiritual centres of Islam were restored. As well as the construction of mosques, various trends and organisations of modern Islam were promoted. At the same time, it became clear that neither communism in all its versions (Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian or Yugoslav) nor capitalism (Greek and Turkish) had managed to have any profound effect on the spiritual foundations of Muslim identity. But it became equally clear that under the influence of Kemal Ataturk's secularism and the pressure of communism Balkan Islam had been substantially "Europeanized" in everyday life, in its rites and in social and political terms. Its followers unanimously reject the criticism of conservative emissaries and view their fundamentalist recommendations skeptically. They used the military support and material assistance received from a number of Muslim countries, pro-Islamic circles and organisations pragmatically. The process of "Islamization" of the ethnic and national identity in the Realm of Islam gave way to the process of "nationalization" of Islam. This manifested itself in the specific case of the final shaping of the Bosnian national identity.

The changes had some tragic consequences as well. The political collapse of socialism in its Soviet communist version caused a profound crisis in the ideology prevailing over the larger part of the peninsula. The subsequent vacuum was immediately filled by nationalism, which hurried to yield its all too familiar poisonous fruit.

The truth borne out in the suffering of both Christians and Muslims that the clinging to what set them apart rather than to what brought them together would always lead to common disaster and pain was forsaken once again. Ethnic and national collisions acquired by then the obsolete features of religious conflicts and burst out vehemently between the Cross and the Crescent. Many tragic records since World War II were set: the first genocide (Srebrenica, 1995), the largest number of casualties (Bosnia, 1992 – 1995), the most massive refugee wave (Kosovo, 1999), the first armed intervention of NATO on the European soil. The hush that followed could not veil the various degrees of tension between the two communities.
More often than not the EU Member States are dismayed witnesses of the dramatic events and their intervention fails to bring the desired results. The peoples on the peninsula frantically seek the answer to the question of crucial importance for the present and future, i.e. how to re-“Europeanize” their region after its successive “Balkanization”? Many answers can be seen in their successful integration into the European building effort. Both Christians and Muslims persistently try to adjust to this trend/process, while preserving their identity and cultural specificity, where the religious tradition constitutes an important element. But it is an illusion to believe that this process per se will settle the complicated problems in the relations existing between the two communities. It is rather indicative of the difficulties to overcome in their traumatic past and difficult present. Speaking of these one should once again refer to the age-long track record of co-existence, which has evolved a system of relations capable of withholding the vicissitudes of time. Even in the outbreak of bloody conflicts, this system reveals it ability “to resurrect” and again lead the followers of the two religions to a better future.

Western Europe. Unlike Balkan Muslims who are part and parcel of the indigenous population of the peninsula, Muslims in “old Europe” are recent newcomers. Most of them are descendants of the immigrants from the colonies who made for the parent countries in the wake of World War II (North Africans to France, “Indian Muslims” to the United Kingdom, Surinamese to the Netherlands), as well as Turks to Germany. Later on, Muslim immigrants came to Italy, Spain and Portugal and to the Nordic countries. The motivation was economic. The main goal was to make money in order to ensure a better life upon the expected return home. The European governments, general public and business circles viewed them as cheap and humble manpower. The fact of referring to them as “die Gastarbeiter” clearly showed the temporary nature of their stay.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, slower growth and rising unemployment within the EU sharpened resistance to immigrant labour. By the 1990s, there was increased resistance to immigration, with rising unemployment levels and the end of the boom years in for European economies, but the worsening economic situation in Muslim countries meant that the immigration into Europe continued.

In contrast to the Balkans, here Islam is still a transient element in the collective mind. In the same times the long stay of its proponents has turned them into a factor of varying weight in each European country. Five centuries after the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain, Europe is once again becoming a land of Islam – albeit for a minority of the European population. This is reinforced by the differential birth rates that account for the growth of the Muslim population in Europe. The restrictions on immigration raise the issue of the integration of already settled “European” Muslims who constitute communities, groups and associations in ethnic and national terms. This presence in Western Europe generates problems related to the interaction of and distinction between religion and politics, as well as the role of religious institutions in the public sphere. It becomes necessary to re-assess the manifestations of the secular and the spiritual in education and the public administration and to specify the personal and family legal status. The Islamic “factor” is the focal point of attention for part of the media; it features highly in ideological disputes and often has direct impact on the social climate.

Clearly the integration of Muslims affects the spiritual and political sphere in Western Europe at large and in each individual country in particular. Their spiritual and political condition gives a new thrust to the dialogue between Christianity and Islam. It also leaves its imprint on the relations existing between European and Muslim countries, which are often neighbors. A direct projection of this situation is the issue of Turkey’s EU membership. Debate on this issue is heated by the subconscious feeling that, sooner or later, integration processes would extend to incorporate the countries on “the Muslim coast” of the Mediterranean. Globalization makes this prospect feasible and that is at a time when the population of these countries would be demographically comparable to that on the European continent.

We have two sets of data on the number of Muslims. One of them comes from the official statistical sources, while the other is considered to reflect the actual numbers but with some approximation. The numbers are as follows: France – 3.263 million (5.5 % of the total population) and 5 million; Germany – 1.738 million (3 %) and 2.7 million; UK – 1.547 million (2.6 %) and 1.8 million; Italy - 544 thousand (1.2 %) and 700 thousand; Spain – 479 thousand (1.2 %) and 600 thousand; the Netherlands - 687 thousand (4.3 %) and 800 thousand; Belgium - 252 thousand (2.5 %) and 300 thousand; Denmark – 80 thousand (1.5 %) and 100 thousand; Portugal - 9 thousand (0.1%) and 30 thousand. Hence their number ranges between 8.9 million (2.4 %) and 15 million.

The situation of Muslim communities, the level of their religious zeal and public activity, as well as the manner of their integration depend on a multitude of factors, the major ones being the specific features of Muslim identity in the country of origin and the socio-political specificities of the European country they live in.

The diverse identity of Islam and of the population in the countries of origin within the Realm of Islam makes the “community of believers” in Europe a mosaic of different racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities and groups. There exist obvious differences between the Maghreb people in France and Pakistani people in the UK, between Turks in Germany and Surinamese in the Netherlands. The diversity becomes deeper
due to the varying strength of the ethnic and national solidarity. It’s obvious that the link to the native country affects the auto-identification of each Muslim and his descendants. Furthermore, it determines the nature of various ethnic and national groups, their cohesion and mobilization. The continued support from the governments of Muslim countries makes observers conclude that each mosque in Europe (and those visiting it for that matter) are under the influence of a Muslim capital city. The national differences are coupled with contradictions of an ethnic, sectarian, political and everyday nature: between Turks and Kurds, between Arabs and Berbers, between the Sunni majority and the Shiite followers, between proponents and opponents of the Algerian National Salvation Front, the disputes on the Palestinian issue, the “Salman Rushdie affair”, the war in Iraq, etc.

The political foundations of Western European society, alongside the specific features of individual countries, exert the decisive influence on the way of life of Muslim communities in them. The democratic system enshrined in the legislation gives them guarantees for their freedom to worship and to take part in the socio-political life on an equal footing.

European society is secular and many countries have a civil religious institution: the Anglican Church in the UK, the Lutheran Church in the Nordic countries. All religions are equal before the law but the civil religious institution has some financial and other advantages, including in representation before the authorities. Differences exist in the registration of confessions as well. In Italy, each religious group may sign an agreement (intessa) with the government, which ensures cooperation and financial support under certain terms and conditions. The situation in Germany similar is but many Muslim groups have failed to meet the conditions for their recognition so far. In Austria, the Muslim religious community has been recognized by the government since 1979. There remain countries like France and the Netherlands, which have proclaimed secularism as their government policy. The separation between government and religion in these countries rules out any agreement between their institutions. Still, a coordination accord has been reached in France with the approval of the Conseil français du culte musulman in May 2003, granting representative power to its followers similar to the arrangements offered to the Christian and Jewish communities.

The review of the Muslim presence in Europe once again leads to the question of the compatibility and the opportunities for coordination between the principles of secularism and religious freedom. The success and the constraints in this respect influence the course of the integration of Muslim communities into the European nations – a key issue for the spiritual and political future of the continent. The way it is resolved in the individual countries depends on the prevailing and law-governed concepts of the essence, nature and dimensions of the nations. There is no EU coordinated strategy in this respect. Each country has its legislative regulations and administrative rules applicable to Muslims and other immigrants, which can be categorized into several major models of the approach:

Assimilation. Assimilation is a word used to describe the process by which “Muslims in Europe are gradually becoming more and more like other Europeans”, This is an attitude and a policy to accept the newcomer without any caveats or discrimination, ignoring much of his cultural identity. He has to join the host national community and to master the relevant civic behavior and culture. The paragon of this model is France, which proclaims its inherent values as universal, implying that they are superior to those of immigrants. Muslim organisations and institutions are obliged to follow without any exceptions the principles related to the equality among people, the freedom of thought, conscience and religion with the neutral stance of the Republic, while their religious manifestations are to comply with the public order. The French case demonstrates the limits of assimilation policies. Their processes have “often exacerbated the tensions between minority groups and the host society”, with strong defensive reactions from minority groups and an increase in stereotypes, prejudice and rejection of the minority group by the host society. This can be seen in the French situation and may explain some of the current tensions that exist in French society.

Insertion leading to multiculturalism. Practised in the Anglo-Saxon countries, this model respects the specific features of “the other” and insists on their preservation. Thus each of the two components of the nation, the indigenous community and the immigrant community, accepts that it is different from the other. The values of tolerance and respect for difference as espoused by the multiculturalism provide useful foundations for successful coexistence of Muslim and non-Muslim communities. But this coexistence requires efforts on both sides. There exists the danger of encapsulation and the inevitable concomitant alienation inhibits the attainment of shared national objectives and ideals. A typical example to this effect is the Muslim Parliament convened in the UK in 1991. In the course of the debates, which took a whole month, many “MPs” rejected the British political and legal system as irrelevant to Muslims. Those extreme positions were contested but they came to show the adverse effects of the “insufficient bridges” of tolerance between the two communities.

A sign of the differences between the two approaches is the attitude to the external manifestations of the Muslim identity. The Pakistani bus driver in London is allowed to wear the Muslim turban under the uniform cap, while in France “l’affaire du voile” has been high on the public agenda for quite some time and has caused restrictive legislative measures.

The results of these approaches and their variants have been rather contradictory. To quote the British researcher Sami
Zubaida "differences between immigrants, their children and their grandchildren drive de-ethnicisation and, above all secularization... Many more turn towards a moderate or unconservative form of Islam, towards what might be called a European Islam". An increasing number of groups find their fulfilment as citizens of the respective European countries. Without losing their religious identity and culture, they try to match it with the culture and traditions of the host country. Signs of this attitude are the observance of its laws and the participation in its socio-political life, as well as the striving to involve ever more compatriots into the mainstream.

As well as positive achievements, there are weaknesses and adverse consequences. In the comparison of the French and British approaches, the French researcher Jean-Marie Le Breton comes to the conclusion that "in both countries and in Europe at large Muslims occupy the most disadvantaged levels of society". The Arabic researcher Bassam Tibi makes the point that "Islamic migrants who want to become citizens of the West are caught between these views: between rejection and the pressure to join a cultural ghetto". Hence the observation of Sami Zubaida that some children of Muslim immigrants turn to Islamic universalism rather than becoming more secular. However, the most telling evidence of this failure is the acceptance by "European" Muslims of concepts typical of religious and political trends in the \textit{Realm of Islam} which oppose European values. They are against democracy since this is understood as blasphemy because the role of legislation is exercised by the humans and not by Allah. Their activity is pointed to change the corrupt society into an Islamic society through converting the thoughts of the corrupt society into Islamic thoughts.

This phenomenon, which has developed over the last few decades, affects mainly young people from the suburbs, who are threatened by marginalization. Most of those involved are characterized by pious behaviour. They strictly observe the rites and traditions in family relations and everyday life. But an active minority has formed joining extremist organisations and participating in their aggressive, often terrorist undertakings. These moves make the authorities to resort to defensive action, which further aggravates the alienation between Muslims and the host national communities. The terrorist act of 09/11 has brought about additional complications. In the wake of that tragic date, European Muslims, who used to be seen as ethnic or national minorities, are now increasingly identified with their Islamic appurtenance, which appears to have surpassed race as a focus of conflicts and discrimination.

The application of the two approaches and their diverse variations, the success achieved and the obvious weaknesses call for the search of more effective methods. Some argue that the debate about assimilation or insertion is out-modeled and that today it is about new heterogeneous identities, creolisation, "logic of hybridity", 3rd possibility/space, connecting previously incompatible things. This shows the possibilities of going beyond the debate dealt with here and highlights the complexity of the issue and weakness of both simplistic notions of assimilation and multiculturalism.

The new challenges and the development of Muslim communities require more complex strategies. So, neither simplistic multiculturalism nor assimilation can address today's problems easily. Experts once again turn to integration, trying to suggest it as an option because it is impossible to practice it in reality everywhere. Matching together the advantages of the former two models, it has to avoid their negative effects. Its objective is not assimilation but mitigation and even elimination of the sharp differences between the host community and immigrants. This is a continuous open process that preserves the secular nature of European society and also takes into account the specific features of the Islamic religious and lifestyle tradition. Its followers are given the chance to have fully fledged participation in the cultural, social and political life of the host country. Integration builds on the mutual and continuous cultural enrichment supported by universal religious and philosophical values. In the words of a member of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, the former German diplomat Murad Wilfried Hofmann, "Integration however is a viable option, and is favored by the majority of Muslims". But in order to pursue it consistently and to achieve the desired results, the European states must ensure that their constitutions and bills of rights allow Muslims to adhere to the precepts of their religion. Muslims must be willing to learn local languages and, in the case of immigrants leaders, "to teach the compatibility of Islam with democracy and human rights".

To quote the Italian sociologist Stefano Allievi, “it will henceforth not be possible to understand the modern history and social evolution of Europe without taking into account its Muslim component. Similarly “it will be impossible to understand the history and social evolution of Islam without taking into account its European component”. Muslims in the Balkans and in Western Europe are exposed to the multi-faceted influence of their Christian environment which, at the same time, they have been changing considerably over the centuries. The lessons of the past and the present reveal the scope of the tasks facing European Christians and Muslims in the name of their harmonious and mutually enriching co-existence.
Fulbright Interview

Snejana Teneva: David, why did you choose Bulgaria for your Fulbright research?

David Toal: I have a close personal connection to Bulgaria in that I had the good fortune to meet, fall in love with, and marry a girl from Sofia years ago. In the years we have been married, I have visited this country numerous times, and each time her family enthusiastically packed up the car and took me to visit some of the many cultural gems and natural splendors in Bulgaria. Initially, I was amazed by how many great attractions were to be found here and was a bit baffled that neither I nor many other foreigners seemed to be aware of how much the country had to offer. Each time I returned to the country however, it became more and more obvious that the word was getting out about Bulgaria. I was hearing more foreign languages spoken in places where previously I had heard only Bulgarian, and I wondered what effect these new international visitors might have on the country.

I had closely studied the tourism industry while at the Hotel School at Cornell University, and I knew that for all of its economic benefits, tourism could often be a “two-edged sword” in the form of its social impact. It was clear from my own personal experiences that prices for tourism services were significantly increasing at the Black Sea, where the majority of international visitors to Bulgaria were spending their time. At the same time, I knew from speaking with Bulgarians that their wages seemed to be spread thinner every year. I was curious to know the extent to which the increase in international visitor arrivals might be driving the price increases in major Bulgarian destinations, and if the attitudes and behaviors of Bulgarians making travel decisions might be changing in response to any price increases. In other words, I wanted to know if foreigners could be making it too expensive for my new relatives and other Bulgarians to travel to certain places within their own country.

S.T. Your research is in the domestic tourism industry of Bulgaria. In what way does it relate to the Fulbright objective of promoting cross-cultural interaction?

D.T. My research looks at the effect of international tourism on domestic tourism, so this Fulbright objective is very central to my research. Cross-cultural interaction is an inherent part of international travel and often times can even be the motivation for people to make the trip. While domestic tourism is not cross-cultural by nature, the destinations that attract people traveling within their own country are often times what international visitors come to enjoy as well. Because both domestic and international travelers would share these attractions at the same time, Bulgarians would likely directly interact with people from the many countries that visit here, and certainly could be affected by changes in...
These destinations that may occur as a result of increased foreign use.

Though Bulgaria has had an established international tourism industry for decades, foreign visitors typically visited a limited number of enclave resorts that were distinctly separate from where Bulgarians would vacation. Now, resort developments that court foreign visitors are far more widespread, and include areas where Bulgarian families have spent their holiday for years. As a result, many of the destinations that Bulgarians have frequented in the past are changing to accommodate foreigners. Developments of new hotels and tourist complexes are rampant throughout the major sea and ski destinations and are noticeably altering the physical qualities of many places. Besides these physical changes, Bulgarians are experiencing an increase in the prices for tourism services such as hotel rooms and restaurant meals in many of the destinations that are becoming popular with foreigners. While my research cannot yet conclusively demonstrate that these price increases are a direct result of increased international visitor arrivals, I believe I have evidence that suggests a correlation between the prices that Bulgarians pay for accommodations and the relative proportion of revenue that a destination earns from foreign visitors. To put it another way, the more success a destination has with attracting foreigners that are willing to pay more for tourism services, the more Bulgarians can be expected to pay as well.

I hope that my efforts can contribute to reinforcing the positive aspects of the cross-cultural interaction that are already occurring as a result of increased international interest in visiting Bulgaria. Further, through an exploration of the potential negative impacts that international tourists may have on the experience of the domestic tourist, I hope to identify opportunities to develop services that cater to displaced Bulgarian vacationers and also to propose ways of addressing any resentment local travelers might feel toward their foreign counterparts.

S.T. How does the increase of foreign visitors to Bulgaria affect Bulgarians’ travel decisions?

D.T. It’s still a little too soon for me to say exactly what effect increased international visitor arrivals is having on the average Bulgarian planning a trip in this country. Critical data needed to support my hypothesis has been elusive in some cases, questionably accurate at times, and sometimes curiously reported with conspicuous omissions. While I had expected that there would likely be challenges in finding the data I would need, I never could have anticipated what those challenges would actually be. I might offer some examples to illustrate the unexpected difficulties I have encountered in my data collection. For instance, the Bulgarian National Statistics Institute, which compiles and reports data on the country’s tourism industry, did not publish reports on tourism data between the years 1997 and 1999 when the country was recovering from an economic crisis. Because my hypothesis is dependent on demonstrating measurable correlations over time between foreign visitor arrivals and the prices Bulgarians pay for tourism services, this three-year gap in observations seriously limits what I can establish statistically. I am optimistic that hope is not lost however, because the report for the year 2000 offers some summary for those years, just not at the level of detail I would need for my research. Other times I have come across anomalies in analysis of the data that are inconsistent with logical possibilities and therefore suggest that the data could not have been accurately reported in these cases. Most curious of all of the problems I have encountered in collecting data are the reports’ omission of figures for some of the most prominent tourism destinations in Bulgaria, including places such as Sunny Beach, Golden Sands, Bansko, Borevets, and others. I suspect that their data might be included in the numbers for other nearby cities, but I have yet to find a person or source to verify this.

At this time, I have decided to shift my focus away from collecting reported statistical data and move on the next phase of my project, which is surveying the Bulgarian population to determine any attitudinal or behavioral changes related to price changes. As this is the first survey I have ever designed or administered, I am following a steep learning curve to develop relevant, unbiased questions and achieve results that can be considered statistically valid. For example, I learned that I initially underestimated the sample size that I will need for the survey results to be accurately representative of the Bulgarian population, so I’m currently exploring alternate ways to most cost effectively administer the survey. I hope to ultimately find answers to questions...
about the choices Bulgarian travelers have made over the last several years about where to vacation, when, for how long, and any attitudes they have towards tourism service prices. After analyzing the survey results, I can compare any trends related to the behavior of Bulgarian travelers to any tendencies in international arrivals over time. Then, through the magic of computer aided statistical models, I can hopefully identify any instances where changes in the number of international visitors could be partially causing observed changes in the behavior of Bulgarian travelers. When I can make a more conclusive statement on what exactly those changes might be, Fulbright will be the first to know.

S.T. How did Fulbright change your life?

D.T. Because Fulbright continues to change my life, I’m afraid I can’t yet fully appreciate the extent to which I have changed. While in the middle of a normal day in Bulgaria, I’m generally not aware of any life altering forces affecting me. However, when I consider how different today’s normal day is from a normal day a year ago, I begin to gain a new perspective on the drama of this experience. For example, I would not have thought twice about making an appointment to get a haircut last year. Today, however, this could be a tricky task because I might struggle to make myself understood, and maybe I will not know exactly what is being said to me. Learning and using the Bulgarian language has been challenging and even frustrating at times, but I’ve also learned that my vocabulary gaps can generally be overcome with patience and a bit of creativity. So one way that Fulbright has changed my life is that I tend to go a little longer before getting a haircut, but also I have become more confident in my ability to function outside of the US and more admiring of the many people adjusting to life in my country.

Probably the most immediately noticeable change in my life as a Fulbrighter is that I finally have time to actually think. As a student with an excessively overloaded schedule in an very demanding university program, I only had time to do the many projects and assignments that needed to get done, but rarely could I ever take time to actually think much about them. The most significant and enduring changes in my life will likely come from having time this year to reassess the things I studied at Cornell, to consider alternate approaches to the challenges presented by my Fulbright research project, and to explore options for making a career for myself at the end of the grant period. Because I have been afforded the luxury of regrouping after graduation and working on a project that is closely related to my professional interests, I will be better prepared to make informed career choices that fit best with my long term goals. Further, having an abundance of time this year has taught me another important lesson about the threat posed by the “tyranny of freedom”. Because my schedule is, for the first time in my life, decided entirely by my own ambitions, I have had to learn how to function in an environment where my workload is not predetermined by someone else. In this way, my Fulbright experience has encouraged me to develop a greater sense of personal initiative and has reinforced the discipline practices needed to take responsibility for projects I approach as an individual.

Finally (in what is certainly not a comprehensive summary of the lasting impact that Fulbright will have on my life), this year has introduced a lot of new people into my life and has given me an opportunity to develop deeper personal relationships with my wife and her family here in Bulgaria. Meeting with other Fulbrighters of widely varying backgrounds, interests, and areas of expertise has made for more than just interesting conversation. Our shared experiences here in Bulgaria create a bond that I hope will connect many of us in enduring friendships. Outside of the Fulbright community, I have enjoyed the company of people from many other countries with whom I have found common ground in the collective foreignness we share as expats in Bulgaria. With the help of the many Bulgarians I’ve met, I readily learned the “dos and don’ts” of Sofia, and I don’t think I could ever have become so comfortable here without the graciousness of my local guides. Most helpful of all have been my wife, Illiana, and her family, whom I am finally beginning to understand when they speak. Fulbright has made it possible for me to really become a part of this family, to more fully appreciate the scope of their charms and peculiarities, and to show them more about who I am than I ever could have done in a short visit. The decision to become a Fulbrighter was unquestionably one of the most significant choices I have made in my life and will greatly influence how I live it.
ACHLEITNER WINS MEDAL FOR SERVICE TO UNIVERSITY

Herbert K. Achleitner, professor at Emporia State University, School of Library and Information Management, KS was awarded the "St. Kliment Ohridski" Blue Ribbon Medal for Distinguished Services at the University of Sofia - Bulgaria. The selection of the award was based upon the candidate’s service and contributions to the university and the library studies program. This award was voted on by the University of Sofia - Bulgaria faculty. In the fall of 2001, Achleitner was a visiting professor at the University of Sofia - Bulgaria, Department of Library and Information Science, on his first Fulbright Senior Specialist grant. Achleitner was presented the award at the Third Bi-annual Conference of Libraries, Globalization and Cooperation. The ESU School of Library and Information and the Department of Library and Information Sciences, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia - Bulgaria host a bi-annual conference to provide interested library and information science professionals the opportunity to discuss issues facing libraries.

ETS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

Over 130 English language teachers, directors and representatives of educational institutions and language schools, as well as interested professionals from all over Bulgaria attended the two half-day ETS Professional Development Seminars on "Preparing for Global Competence: TOEFL and other ETS English Language Tests and Learning Tools" on June 7, 2005. The seminars were held at the central office of the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission in Sofia and were conducted by ?gnes Vajda and Zs?fia N. Horv?th from the European office of the Institute of International Education (IIE) based in Budapest. The seminars aimed to acquaint the participants with the Internet-Based TOEFL (iBT) testing and other ETS high-quality tests and learning tools. The Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission was a co-organizer and a co-sponsor of the seminars.
REAC VISIT TO THE FULBRIGHT ADVISING CENTER

On June 13-18, Sherri Spillman, Regional Educational Advising Coordinator for Europe, visited the Fulbright office in Sofia and the regional Fulbright info-centers in Plovdiv and Veliko Turnovo. She inspected the Fulbright Advising Center, the Thompson Prometric Computer Testing Center at the Fulbright Commission and the Fulbright Language Training Center in Sofia.

In Plovdiv Ms. Spillman visited the Fulbright Info-Center and the American Corner. She also conducted a training workshop for the Fulbright coordinators from the Fulbright info-centers in Plovdiv, Bourgas, Stara Zagora and Sliven and met with students from a language high school.

In Veliko Turnovo Ms. Spillman met with the Fulbright coordinators from the Fulbright info-centers in Veliko Turnovo, Varna and Rousse and made a presentation at a foreign language high school.

LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR ROMA CHILDREN IN VIDIN

The Decade of Roma integration was launched in February this year. Many European and Bulgarian organizations took this initiative to heart. In Bulgaria seven regions were established for the integration of Roma children into elementary and high schools. Vidin is one of these regions.

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission responded to the challenge and sponsored an English language course for Roma children in “Simeon Veliki” Language School in Vidin. Twelve children from different schools were selected with the help of Donka Panayotova, chairperson of the Roma organization “Drom” in Vidin.

The course started on 1st March, 2005. The students are from 11 to 15 years old. They are extremely charming, inquisitive and motivated. Their consistency and will to learn the language is impressive. There are some difficulties, of course, but it is just the beginning and the Fulbright regional coordinator Dilyana Stefanova is optimistic that if both sides in the process of integration are persistent and tolerant, it will not take long before we see the positive results.
ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR AY 2005-06
OUTGOING BULGARIAN FULBRIGHT GRANTEES

On June 27, 2005 the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission organized its regular one-day orientation program for AY 2005-06 Bulgarian Fulbright grantees. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria and current U.S. grantees in Bulgaria shared impressions and gave useful advice to the new Bulgarian Fulbright students, scholars and teachers. We wish all Bulgarian Fulbright grantees a rewarding stay in the U.S.

IN MEMORIAM

Professor Dimiter Boyadjiev, Head of the Department of Classic Studies at Sofia University, passed away on June 8, 2005. In 1996 he was a Fulbright lecturer in Latin language and literature at the University of Gainsville, Florida. Professor Boyadjiev was an internationally known scholar in classic studies with numerous publications and a great contribution to the development of the Department of Classic Studies of Sofia University. The Bulgarian Fulbright community lost a dear and respected member.

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES
FOR U.S. FULBRIGHT GRANTEEES

Trip to Plovdiv, May 2005
"If someone believes truly in his dreams and does everything to achieve them, sooner or later they become true." It was the motto that led me on the hard way to my success. I believed in my dream and it was really realized after a long time of hard work. My dream was to study abroad and especially in the USA, to receive good higher education there and to be competitive when I return to Bulgaria. I succeeded in achieving my aim owing to hard work, good preparation and a lot of efforts.

Now I am going to finish the Foreign Languages School "Ivan Vazov" in Smolyan. From the point of view of a senior, I really realize that my studying exactly at this school has had a powerful influence on my character, my dreams in life and my future career goals. Everything began with my coming to study at Foreign Languages School "Ivan Vazov" but then I didn't realize how the schooldays here would change my life. Due to the good preparation in English I received here, I felt confident that I could apply to study in universities abroad and especially in the USA and compete with students from all over the world. The solid knowledge in English, which I received from highly qualified teachers in Foreign Languages School "Ivan Vazov", gave me the conviction that I could succeed.

Once I took the decision to continue my higher education abroad, I set to hard work because I knew that it was only hard work and a lot of efforts that were the keys for my success. Studying abroad was the only aim in my life and I lived for it. In the summer when all my friends enjoyed themselves, I stayed at home, studied hard from morning till night and prepared myself for my exams. My preparation included learning hundreds of words every day, reading a lot of books in English and making grammatical tests. I took two exams – TOEFL and SAT, which were the first steps to my success. Before my first exam TOEFL I attended a course for special preparation for students wanting to take this exam. This course was of great importance for my preparation. Every exam was like one ordeal for me but after taking it I was reassured in my future success. However, it wasn't all. After taking the exams, I had to choose the universities and colleges, which best answered my criteria for good higher education. I had to choose those universities which would provide me with personal and academic foundations, which would be paramount not only in my intended career but also in my personal enrichment. It took me a lot of sleepless nights to fill all the documents necessary for all universities. However, now I don't regret spending all those nights in that way because I know all of them were equally important for my success.

It was most difficult for me to choose the major in which I wanted to continue my higher education. I think politics is the best area where I can develop myself. I believe that becoming a good politician one day, I will have a great contribution to the development of my country. Bulgaria is now passing an economic transition and we expect that
we will be integrated to The State Structures of the European Union in 2007. My country really needs good politicians to democratise the Bulgarian society and make Bulgaria a better place to live in. However, Bulgarian universities do not offer the necessary education to students who want to develop themselves and to help the development of our country. Here education is only theoretical, while colleges and universities in the USA give students the opportunity to put theory into practice in real-world settings. Continuing my education abroad, and especially in a developed and democratic country as the USA, will be very beneficial for me and it will impact positively my personal growth socially and intellectually. I believe that living and studying in a country like the USA, where all people are free to express their opinions and make decisions concerning not only themselves but also their country, will democratise me and make me a valuable contribution to the development and democratisation of my country.

Ramapo College of New Jersey offers the major in which I want to continue my education-Political Science and along with the interdisciplinary education it provides students, who are eager to develop themselves in many different fields, it makes the college my best chance for future success in a world where borders have stopped being an obstacle for communication and friendship among people. Although I am absolutely sure that I want to pursue a career in politics, I want to develop myself in many different fields during my undergraduate years. Studying at Ramapo College will impact positively my personal growth socially and intellectually and it is the thing that makes Ramapo College my best chance for future success.

Now I am very happy because I was accepted to study at Ramapo College of New Jersey, which was my first choice among all other colleges and universities. I was also awarded the Presidential Scholarship, which covers my full tuition there. I cannot describe you the joy and satisfaction I felt when I received my acceptance letter. Then I realized that all my efforts and sleepless nights were recompensed. I am very thankful to my family which always supported me and never let me give up my dream to study in the USA. My eyes are full of tears when I am writing that because I will really miss them when I leave Bulgaria but I know everything is for good.

I wish all students who dare to pursue their dreams and to apply to study abroad to have my success!

Nina Krasimirova Kalcheva
Gabrovo Language School, Gabrovo
LaRoche College, PA

My name is Nina Krasimirova Kalcheva. I am from Gabrovo, Bulgaria and I am 18 years old.

In 2004 I successfully passed the TOEFL and the SAT-I international exams, which gave me the opportunity to apply to American colleges and universities all over the world, including La Roche College. It is situated in Pittsburgh, PA, USA and it offers a host of strong programs, including English, History, Biology, Chemistry, Criminal Justice, Psychology, Dance and many more.

An important part of my application to La Roche College, except my TOEFL and SAT-I scores, was my successful partaking in national competitions.

In 2001 I took part in an essay competition as a part of a project: "Creative Leaders in Education in Bulgarian Language and Literature", where I received a Diploma. In the same year I was placed third in the Physics
competition (regional round) and I took part on the third (regional) round in Chemistry competition.

In 2004 I took part in the National Youth Scientific Session "Physics - a window to the world", XXXII National Conference, which was organized by the Physicists’ Union in Bulgaria and the Evrika Foundation. From this competition I received a Diploma awarded to me by Acad. M. Mateev – president of the Physicists’ Union in Bulgaria, who extended his offer to me to take part in the National competition "Space – Present and Future of the Mankind. Ideas for Scientific and Technical Experiments" which was organized by the Evrika Foundation. At this competition, I was one of five competitors to qualify for the final round. On this round, I took part with a computer presentation and a poster named "The Inhabitable Zone". It presented the point of view of the modern Astrobiology, concerning the necessary living conditions on the Earth to make the origins’ life possible starting from the Big Explosion (when the universe was originated) to present days. The commission consisted of scientists who work in the Bulgarian Science Academy. I was asked a lot of questions and was ranked first in Bulgaria. The Diploma and the prize were bestowed to me by the first Bulgarian cosmonaut – Mr. Georgi Ivanov. In addition, my science essay was published in the most prestigious science magazine in Bulgaria – "Science", Issue 1/2005.

The next step was to have an interview with the Director of International Admissions at La Roche College. Mrs. Teneva from the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange – Fulbright, Sofia presented me with the information about La Roche College. She informed me what documents I ought to prepare and how to present myself at the interview.

The interview took place on the 11th of November 2004 at the Fulbright Commission in Sofia. Consequently, I received a letter from La Roche College which informed me that I was accepted as a La Roche College student (Biology Sciences) for the Fall’05 semester.

During the period February – May 2005 I took part in two more competitions. The first one was a national competition as part of the activities during the World Year of Physics. It took place on the 25th of March in Sofia Land, Sofia. The second competition was an international one and Mrs. Teneva from Fulbright notified me about it. It was organized by the World Bank and its topic was "Building a Secure Future. Seeking Practical Solutions". The title of my essay was "Barriers against the killer waves" and I described a solution against Tsunami.

My acceptance to La Roche College has been my greatest achievement. It happened thanks to Mrs. Teneva from the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange- Fulbright, Sofia who gave me valuable information and a lot of practical advice about the necessary documents and requirements. It is my strong belief that Fulbright is a bridge between our reality and the future of all young people who want to continue their education all over the world.
RETHINKING THE MELTING POT: IMMIGRATION AND AMERICAN SOCIETY IN THE 21st CENTURY

Fulbright Foreign Student Program, 2005 New York Enrichment Seminar
April 7-10, 2005

In 2004 Maria Radeva received a Bachelor’s degree in British and American studies from Sofia University and a Fulbright scholarship to complete a Master’s program in East European studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her Master’s thesis will focus on female labor migration.

This event is one of seven enrichment seminars hosted by the US Department of State and The Institute of International Education to support the Fulbright objective of promoting mutual understanding between people of the US and the people of the Fulbright partner countries. The New York seminar, “Rethinking the Melting Pot,” focused on key debates and challenges facing US immigration today. Speakers from the academia, public office, and the non-profit sector presented a diversity of viewpoints framing the political, economic, cultural, legal and historical aspects of the issue. Three “events” in the four-day program had greatest impact on my experience: the opportunity to visit a US high school to present my country, Bulgaria, the closing dinner in Chinatown, and the cross-cultural interaction among the participants.

On the second day of the seminar I attended the Manhattan International High School, founded in 1903 to serve the needs of limited English proficient young immigrants arriving in New York City. I was placed in a group with four other Fulbrighters from Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, and Pakistan. We were to visit a 12th grade English class. Before the visit, the school principle gave us a brief presentation of the school. He explained the school’s goal to develop in each of the young learners...
the skills necessary for success in college and for creative and informed participation in US society. Upon admission, each new student had lived in the US for less than four years and had a native language other than English. Some of the teachers were also immigrants but all teachers shared the school’s philosophy to develop students as whole persons.

The classroom experience was very interesting. Judging from their dress and proficiency in English, all students were the same – New Yorkers just like everyone else on the street, an unidentifiable mix of cultural and linguistic influences. It was easy to believe in the metaphor of the melting pot. However, this conclusion would have been too quick, as the students’ stories proved very soon. Behind the seeming uniformity, each student kept a different tale of origin and arrival. I am from Greece and I live in Manhattan. I am from Korea and I live in Brooklyn. I am from Pakistan and I live in Manhattan.

The original cultural baggage had stronger influence on these students than a mere perception of self. It influenced their perception of the surrounding world as well. This was clearly revealed in the reaction of an Albanian boy to the map of the Balkans I drew on the board. My map was very schematic and imprecise, representing Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia as some distorted round shapes. I was just wondering whether to add a circle for Slovenia when one of the two Albanian-Americans in the class jumped to the board, “Wait, wait, this is totally wrong. Let me do it for you.” He erased my map and drew a new one. His version was no less precise in terms of shape or proportion, but it demonstrated a significant difference: a mysterious unlabeled circle appeared between what were Serbia and Albania. “What is this?” I asked. “Kosovo.” In his mind, the contested ethnic region figured as a nation-state. Was it his American or his Albanian self that determined this representation, I did not ask. I satisfied myself with a mental note on the nuanced meaning of the melting pot.

That evening I attended a dinner hosted by a US Fulbright alumnus in Brooklyn. This time I was grouped together with five different students from Eritrea, Germany, Morocco and Slovakia. The host family had its origins in Greece but their ancestors had moved to Brooklyn a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, Greece was present everywhere in their house, along with images of the amusement park industry. Greek Orthodox icons, amphorae, and Metaxa coexisted with photographs of the Coney Island beach, game stands and amusement rides. I showed the mother, Niki Spanakos, photographs of a trip to monuments of national heritage in Southern Bulgaria: Plovdiv, Asenovata Krepoast, Bachkovski Manastir, Shiroka Luka and Trigrad, and she was amazed to discover that these could have just as well been taken in Northern Greece.

Similar moments of bonding across cultural and national boundaries gave new meaning to the metaphor of the melting pot. The more I interacted with my fellow Fulbrighters from around the world, the more I started to believe that we are all people, we are all citizens of the world; until the closing dinner on the following night reminded me that bonding does not imply melting. The event was significant for two paradoxical observations: that national and regional boundaries are deeply embedded in our consciousness, and that ending up in an oriental club I felt at home.

The closing dinner took place in a restaurant in Chinatown. After we enjoyed a long procession of diverse Chinese dishes, the Fulbright students were invited to display their talents in stage performance of their native culture. Spirits raised, ice broken, we decided to continue the celebration in a club. We started walking downtown as a huge group of a few dozens international students. Getting on the subway train without losing anyone was a challenging but invigorating experience. We got off in the East Village and stopped to decide which club to go to. All agreed that we need a place to dance but we could not reach agreement on the kind of music. The argument continued for much time and in the end our happy diverse family was split into mostly ethnic groups that took off in different directions in anger and disappointment, after all of the dominant groups – German, Latin American and Middle Eastern, had failed to impose their preferences. I felt torn to choose which group to join, especially because I did not think any of the three was anywhere near native to me. In the end I joined my Arab friends in an oriental club. (It was
later discovered that some Germans went to another oriental club two blocks away.) The next few hours made me seriously reconsider the meaning of being Bulgarian. The club featured the now world-famous nargile (a.k.a. hooka), Arab beats, belly-dancing European women, various beverages and Middle Eastern side dishes. My friends soon became the center of attention on the dance floor because their genuine joy to feel at home in a New York club proved contagious. An addicted dancer, I was moving and shaking side by side with everyone else. Initially, I did not feel any particular affection for this specific music and atmosphere. Suddenly, however, a slower piece played and I caught myself performing the traditional moves and posture of the Bulgarian line dance horo. The rhythm of the Arab piece had provoked this unintended response, proving that Bulgarian music is indeed influenced by oriental motifs. A subsequent familiar Greek melody confirmed that the recognition works both ways – the Arabs picked up the rhythm with appreciation.

On the following morning before we parted, my friends apologized if I had felt uncomfortable at “their” club. I shared my unexpected observation about the music and demonstrated some basic horo steps, some typical body postures and some arm movements. They were honestly surprised to discover the parallels and said that they have the same dances, but the posture and the direction and sequence of feet crossing are different. Later that day I had lunch with my new Fulbright friend from Marocco, Abdel, and an older Fulbright friend from Germany that I had met at the Gateway Orientation in August, Sven. Abdel was by then curious to know more about the Balkans, and so was Sven. They both had no idea about the diverse layers of history and interaction that constitute Balkan culture. Their fascination with my stories reminded me of a comment by a Fulbrighter from Turkey the previous evening that Bulgarians need to be more positive about their country and its history. The Turkish also have controversial feelings for the Ottoman period, for example, but they do not shy to speak about its great days.

When I parted with Abdel, I gave him an audio CD with the music performed by Prof. Donna Buchanan’s ensemble at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, consisting of twenty-five instrumental and vocal pieces from the Balkan region. I received the following email form him that evening, “On the way to Boston we listened to your CD. It has some Oriental flavor. There was a song that I found a bit sad and I missed you.”

Indeed, there is a sad song on this CD and it is Bulgarian. The connection my Moroccan friend made between the song and me, the words of the student from Turkey, the mutual appreciation of music at the oriental club, the architectural similarities discovered by the Greek-American, and the mysterious nation-state of Kosovo on the political map of the Balkans of the Albanian-American boy keep occupying my mind for a few days now. How does the melting pot metaphor relate to the Balkans? I think of Paisii Hilendarski’s History, of Maria Todorova’s imagined Balkans, of the minarets and crosses in the Rhodopi photographs and I wonder what sense to make of it all. I came to the New York seminar to learn about US immigration in the 21st century and I left with new questions about my native Balkans. Encounters with new cultural environments, it seems, inevitably push one back to their origins. The American immigrants we met illustrate a similar process of interaction between their native and their recipient cultures. Is New York City a melting pot or a salad bowl? To be honest, I walked out of the seminar with no clearer answer than when I first stepped in. It may be so because a clear answer on this issue does not exist. What exists for sure is a diversity of points of view and interests, an ongoing debate, a battle for identity and recognition, a nation of immigrants, a world of migrants. In the end, one sentence on the seminar brochure gained more sense, “In this day and age mutual respect and understanding are vitally important as we all work to reach peaceful solutions to conflict.” Well said. The ethnic split between us Fulbrighters in Chinatown illustrates the point. It is not enough to be aware of the importance of respect and understanding. It is more vital to maintain and apply this knowledge in practice, a difficult task for all of us.
REMEMBER THE SUNFLOWERS?
Ariel C. Gil, Fulbright-Hays Scholar, Bulgaria, Summer 2004

The silent yellow petals adorned
The millenary fields along the Balkans
As rowdy tour buses
Robbed their basking tranquility.

The flowers welcomed the breeze from the West
And the sun, rising from the East as it always rises,
Making no seeming distinction.

At dawn, when the first rays pierced the morning clouds,
The flowers outstretched their petals and looked toward the sun
Greeting the new day with jubilation.
At dusk, when the shadows cast by neighboring heights
Overwhelmed the sunlight, the flowers curtsied, in sign of reverence
And gratitude for new beginnings yet to unfold.

A year later, they still cover the fields
Left behind, among hushed Thracian art,
Giving testimony of memorable times
That grow fonder as time elapses...
...Remember the Sunflowers?