



Newsletter

Sofia 1000, Al. Stamboliiski blvd., tel. (359 2) 981 85 67, 980 82 12, 981 68 30; fax (359 2) 988 45 17; E-mail: fulbright@fulbright.bg; Internet: www.fulbright.bg, www.fisi-bg.info

FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE Borovets, August 7-19, 2006

The fifth Fulbright International Summer Institute was held in the beautiful mountain resort of Borovets on August 7-19. FISI attracted 51 participants from the U.S., Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Russia and Portugal.

The participants were offered ten courses in a wide variety of areas: "Negotiation and Conflict Resolution", "Financial Tools for Business and Personal Decisions", "Adjusting to Globalization, Regionalization and the Process of Change: The Context of New Management", "An Overview of the United States Judicial System and a Practicum on Litigating a Trial", "Communication, Culture and Technology: Intercultural Competence for Students in Global Times", "Understanding the Media: The Cornerstones of the Effective Communication", "American Foreign Policy and the International System in the Age of Globalization", "Is the World Really Flat: Impact of Globalization on American and European Economies", "Lobbying in the Public Interest", and "Introduction to Bulgarian Culture".

The new group of Fulbright grantees from the U.S. also attended the summer program and studied different aspects of Bulgarian history, politics, economy, folklore, literature and the arts.

All courses were taught in English by distinguished American and Bulgarian professors, most of whom were Fulbright grantees and alumni. The lecturers represented prestigious universities and various companies, e.g. Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Cleveland State University, Indiana University, Florida Atlantic University, University of Dayton, Sofia University, University of National and World Economy, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, New Bulgarian University, National Academy of Arts and various companies and NGOs - Phelps Dunbar LLP, Media



FISI Opening Session: From left to right: Fulbright Commission ED Dr. Julia Stefanova, PAO David Siefkin and Dr. Tatyana Kalkanova, Fulbright Commission Board



FISI participants in class

In This Issue:

Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI)	1
FISI Impressions	2-6
Fulbright Office News	7-8
To Chicago and Back	9-10
Out of America	11-12

Development Center, Common Cause Foundation.

FISI 2006 also offered an exciting cultural program to show the participants the achievements of Bulgarian culture and the magic of Bulgarian nature. The highlight of the first week was a one-day trip to Rila Monastery and Blagoevgrad. This was followed by a trip to Sofia and an adventurous walk to Mt. Moussala, the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula. During the second FISI weekend participants visited the town of Samokov.

Participants and faculty unanimously agreed that the fifth Fulbright International Summer Institute was a big success. They created their own web-based photogallery and started planning the establishment of a FISI alumni association that will encourage productive discussions on important and interesting issues, will provide a stimulating environment for exchange of knowledge and will allow alumni to stay in touch wherever they are.

FISI Impressions

Tiago Villanueva
Graduate student, Medicine, University of Lisbon,
Lisbon, Portugal

GOING FISI



Several people asked me what, being a practicing physician, I was doing in FISI. In a way, since most people tend to have a business or a social sciences background, medics may feel a bit like a fish out of the water. But that was precisely what I was looking for, a complete change of scenery. And I wasn't dissatisfied, I got exactly what I was looking for.

WHY FISI?

Firstly, it was refreshing again to go „back to school“. And particularly, to learn about subjects I knew little or nothing about, like finances, Bulgarian history and culture (even though I ended up „cheating on“ this course and going for Prof Ilg's class), or negotiation. I've always been a fan of multidisciplinary, because I think that regardless of the field of knowledge we end up making a living of, there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from the other areas which we can not only use to boost and

improve our professional life, but also and more importantly, use to harness our personal life and make it richer. In my daily work, I like to listen and learn from everyone that surrounds me, be it the nurse, the physiotherapist, the social worker or the admin. At FISI, I tried to take it one step further, and mingle with people from all backgrounds, from 18 to 70. As a doctor, I meet people from all walks of life on a daily basis, so I thought this would not be any different, with the exception that I was on a holiday this time round!

THE SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION

But what makes an event are the people, and it is amazing how just putting 70 people in a relatively confined area for two weeks can really bring us all „up close and personal“ in no time! (ok, I know what you're thinking, you perverts!) At times, I thought to myself that this was almost like being on Big Brother, whereby physical confinement is able to fast-track and unleash true social dynamics that we otherwise would not be able to flesh out so easily in everyday life. And we should not forget that Professor Ilg confessed to his students in the end of the course that the final presentation had actually been a social experimentation he had engineered!

THE HIDDEN AGENDA

One thing that I've always felt, and many people agreed with me, is that FISI sometimes felt like a

„recruiting camp“ for American universities, and that we were being given a „brainwash“. Like if we were all on trial, and being gauged for our personal and professional abilities. It might just have been my imagination here playing the trick, but it was evident how many teachers were promoting and encouraging the American Higher Education system. And of course it helps the cause to have some American participants „infiltrated“. FISI was actually an opportunity for me, for the first time, to gain some exposure to the American way of teaching and learning. And I admit that it is, in many ways, far more appealing and innovative than the „old“ European school. As such, the FISI courses were really a breath of fresh air for me. And I'm sure it would have been a great experience for me to have studied medicine in the US.

I didn't leave Borovets feeling like starting to apply to a US university the following day, but I did get a good idea of the perks of the system and its potential to explore our personal and professional development to the limit, in a way that is very hard to achieve otherwise, at least where I come from. And naturally, who knows, one day, if I won't decide to go for it, even if just for the experience! FISI indeed opened my eyes and called my attention to new, alternative, seductive, and endless possibilities and opportunities, and enabled me to dream a little. And dreaming is everything. I think it is vital to keep this feeling going at all times, even if just to keep us alive, because it is really easy to get caught in a career ladder and stop dreaming.

MS BULGARIA

One final word regarding the host country. I was delighted to get to know Bulgaria and its people. As a citizen of an equally small, peripheral and often overlooked country, I am in a good position to judge Bulgaria. There's a lot going for Bulgaria, and particularly its EU membership in January 2007. I surely wasn't indifferent to the delicious and

omnipresent „chopska salads“ and even the „shkembe chorba“, the feeling of being at crossroads between East and West and a certain aura of exotism, and the outstanding pristine mountain ranges, probably as pristine as Europe gets.

But not all is roses. It is noticeable that despite everything, there is still a long way to go to Bulgaria, and I felt distressed at the often shabby quality of service provision in the hotel, in the shops and so on, but particularly with the existence of an informal variable price setting for both Bulgarians and foreigners, a practice that will not be compatible with the adoption, I hope, of the European legislation.

Anyway, for now I will be supporting Levski Sofia in UEFA its Champions League campaign, even though I yesterday I found out they are in a tough group!

WHAT NOW?

Well, I'm back to my job, and looking back at those wonderful two weeks. I've made new friends and contacts from all over the world which I hope to meet again, be it Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovenia, US, Croatia, Romania or even, I have to admit it is the most exotic location for me, Siberia, in Russia! Yes, Yo-yo, even after all the bullying and the threats to throw you out of the window I am eager to go and visit you very soon!

And I've learned, learned and learned. Not only in class, where I learned tremendously and was challenged to think in different and stimulating ways. But first and foremost outside class, with everyone, and learning about life, the world and everything.

Tiago Villanueva, junior doctor and medical journalist, Lisbon, Portugal

Further information: www.studentbmj.com/issues/04/02/reviews/86.php (this is an article written by a FISI alumni friend who told me about FISI in the first place).



Hristo Kaludov
Undergraduate student, Law
Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria



The Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI) is a unique educational and cultural program that develops the exchange of knowledge and ideas through cultures and nations. More personally, it establishes networks and friendships between people. For me, FISI holds great power and potential for good. After attending FISI-2006, I can sum up the experience with these words: **there is nothing like FISI.**

My road to FISI began one spring day in 2006. I found Fulbright's announcement about the upcoming event and I decided to participate. I wanted to improve my career by gaining new perspectives; learn more about people from other countries; and find new friends. So, I took the red pill. I didn't know what to expect from this Fulbright summer institute. I was impressed and thrilled by the name of Fulbright, and I must admit I was a little nervous. But my clouds of anxiety soon dissipated as the Fifth Annual FISI began.

FISI took place in the Bulgarian resort of Borovets, from August 6-19, 2006. I had a great time during these two weeks. The detailed planning of such an international event is a tribute to the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission that organized it. The institute was perfect in every way. Of course, FISI would be nothing without the distinguished lecturers and other participants who attended. For me, it felt great to be a part of the FISI-team.

The experience taught me to be patient, tolerant and

open-minded towards the opinions of others. As a result, many strong friendships were formed. The days and nights of studying and participating in so many activities together were overwhelming at times. But the atmosphere was always uniquely warm and inspired; passionate and devoted; and very satisfying. But that was only the tip of the iceberg!

Besides the intellectual stimulation of FISI, there were also many social activities like swimming, hiking, disco-parties and so on, and so on. Who can forget the moments of group stargazing on the dark, grassy slopes, or spending the night on the open roof of the hotel? (Thanks to Ana and Veselina :)). Of course, I can't leave out the FISI group's ascending of Mount Musala – the highest peak in the Balkans; now that was a great team-builder (accompanied by great emotions and sunburn.) (For me, another motivating factor for climbing the mountain was the „blonde reason“- as intense as the sunlight at the altitude of 2970 meters :). But what would life look like without such reasons? – Almost nothing!)

Enough is enough with writing about fun. Let me tell you about the series of lectures at FISI. Actually, my amazement was shared among all the courses. Originally, I had signed-up for only four courses. But, by the end of FISI, I had completed five courses altogether! And the courses were so diverse! I attended the following five courses:

1. From Law School to Lawyer: An Overview of the United States Judicial System and a Practicum on Litigating a Trial delivered by David M. Korn, Phelps Dunbar LLP, LA, USA;
2. Lobbying in the Public Interest by Lyudmila Georgieva and Metiu Metev, Common Cause Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria;
3. American Foreign Policy and the International System in the Age of Globalization by Prof. Mark Kramer, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA;
4. Negotiation and Conflict Resolution by Prof. George Siedel, University of Michigan, Business School, MI, USA;

5. Is the World Really Flat: Impact of Globalization on American and European Economies by Prof. Timothy J. Ilg, University of Dayton, OH, USA.

Every FISU course has influenced me. I can honestly say that it was great chance for me to really participate. So, the most essential things I learned from the courses:

1. Keep your eyes open „in terms of the process“ (c. Prof. Timothy Ilg) of getting more information- get all the information you can! In today's world, you have to be competitive and highly motivated (more motivated than the Chinese and the Indians!);
2. If you have listened carefully to Prof. George Siedel, then you are confident that Information is Power. And, to get it, you will have to ask questions and listen to the answers- carefully- in terms of asking more questions; so that, finally, you can get more information;
3. But after the round of lectures by Prof. Mark Kramer, you know that your own „policy“ towards people may have many strengths; but, it will suffer many constraints, as well. So, you have to be well prepared- again!;
4. Have you had in mind to establish a personal network? You could have it in mind if you attended

the Lobbying Course. This is the very first thing that you have to start with- count it as „step one“- and it says: establish contacts, as many as you can make, or afford;

5. And the final fifth essential comes from Korn's Newsletters: „Fins in!“

But here I won't tell you fairy tales,
I will speak about sentences and bails;
In litigation if you want to prevail
better train your „fins in“ skills unveiled.

If David is not impressed too much - don't care,
be bold and practice more to be hailed!
Otherwise, under real sentence tread,
without the chance of being put on bail,
no beads for you, my dear fellow... :)

So, as everyone can see, I had great time all these two weeks. I can tell you long stories in many words, but my impressions are my own. Whatever I tell you will be my point of view- and that cannot be experienced by reading but by participating! You have to experience FISU on your own! So, don't you think that it is quite enough of reading others' stories and that it is time to prepare for the next FISU in 2007?



David M. Korn
FISU Lecturer, Course 5: From Law School to Lawyer:
An Overview of the United States Judicial System
and a Practicum on Litigating a Trial
Phelps Dunbar LLP, LA, USA

The first Bulgarian words I learned were not "hello" or "good-bye" or even "thank you." No, it was a strange sounding guttural word that emerges deep from the pit of one's intestine. That word was **Nazdrave!** Although my knowledge of Bulgarian grammar is zero, I can only assume that an exclamation point always follows the word Nazdrave.

See what I mean. It looks lonely in the last sentence without an exclamation point.



To be candid, I am not really sure what Nazdrave! means to Bulgarians. I think it means cheers, health, happiness or something along those lines. Whatever the case, the word now holds special meaning for me. In my mind, it will forever be synonymous with my sojourn to Borovets for the 2006 Fulbright International Summer Institute.

Forgive what might appear to be an artificially contrived semantical segway, but the topic at hand is, after all, FISU and believe it or not, I (like most lawyers) have an opinion to express.

My opinion, however, is difficult to convey through the medium of language. In Borovets, I taught a course which involved students participating in a mock trial. In just five days, they achieved skills that I have seen some law students take years to master. They were indeed stupendous. Teaching, and the classes themselves, however, were just part of the incredible experience in Borovets. The relationships developed and the intangible quality *in terms of the process*, are indefinable. Paradoxically, although I was the teacher, I felt my students and colleagues brought more to my experience in Borovets than I could ever have imparted to them.

When I arrived home after my participation in the program, I found myself for the first time, at a lack of words. Did any of you have difficulty trying to describe your experience adequately, whether it was at the proverbial water cooler, or during the normal day-to-day conversations that follow a person's absence from their normal routine for a few weeks? I found the conversations inevitably went something along these lines:

Them: "So, how was your trip to Bulgaria?"

You: "You know, it was really something, it's hard to explain in a few words."

Them: "Like how so? Was the food good? Was the architecture cool? Did you like your class and students?"

You: Yes, yes and definitely yes.

* * *

The foregoing exchange, while accurate, leaves so much to be desired. In frustration, you might just end the dialogue by saying, "It was magical." That usually stops the other person from inquiring further, as they don't really know what to say.

I felt particularly pleased that I had come up with the word "magical" to describe my experience in Borovets -- that is, until I read some articles that FISU participants penned in past years, and I saw that they had also used the term "magical" to describe their experience. All of a sudden, I felt extremely uncreative having stumbled upon an apparent plagiaristic faux pas.

It was absolutely a magical experience, apparently for others as well. But how magical can magical be if it is a word being used by everyone to describe their experiences? I desperately tried to think of another word to sum up my Fulbright experience. The first word that came to mind was "spiritual" but you never know who you might offend if you bring matters of soul into the soliloquy. Then I thought I would say, "It was a blast!" The term blast, however, seems too American for what was truly an international experience with cross-cultural awareness. I almost settled on "fantastical" but I felt that was too "Harry Potterish" and despite having the Harry Potter restaurant sign across from the Rila Hotel, it didn't quite do the magical trick for me.

So you see, on this very day, I decided to take things into my own hands and resolve the issue once and for all. What did I do you may ask? So glad you inquired, otherwise this article wouldn't have a conclusion.

I opened the bottle of Bulgarian Rakia that my wonderful and amazing students gave me as a departing gift, and gathered round my friends, colleagues and family members. I raised my glass and made them all repeat one word after me --- **Nazdrave!** My toast was to all the people I met in Borovets and the friends I hope to keep for a lifetime.



Fulbright Office News

CULTURAL ORIENTATION FOR AMERICAN FULBRIGHT GRANTEES



*Official Opening of the Orientation Program
(From left to right: PAO David Siefkin, U.S. Consul Daniel Perrone,
Assistant Regional Security Officer Daniel Hunt and Fulbright Commission
ED Dr. Julia Stefanova)*



The cultural orientation for the AY 2006-07 American Fulbright grantees was held at the Fulbright Commission office on September 28 and 29, 2006. It was officially opened by David Siefkin, Public Affairs Officer, and Daniel Perrone, Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria.

The orientation was a two-day program including

lectures, discussions, a special session dedicated to grantees' practical questions, visit to the National Ethnographic Museum and a one-day trip to Sueva Dupka cave, Glozhene Monastery and the village of Ribaritsa in Stara planina mountain. His Excellency John Beyrle, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria, and his spouse Joselyn Greene attended the welcome reception for the new U.S. grantees, their contact persons and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni.



*U. S. Ambassador John Beyrle (right) welcomes the American Fulbright
Grantees at the reception at Crystal Palace Hotel*



Trip to Sueva Dupka cave



At Glozhene Monastery



In the village of Ribaritsa in Stara Planina Mountain

EXTENDING OUTREACH OF THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM IN BULGARIA

To respond to the new priorities of the Fulbright program regarding outreach to underserved

regions and diverse social groups, the educational adviser Snezhana Teneva made numerous visits to the major Bulgarian universities and high schools all over the country. On several occasions US Embassy officers were also involved in the



Fulbright ED Dr. Stefanova, PAO David Siefkin and Valentina Ivanova, President of Friends of the USA Society in Bulgaria negotiating the opening of a Fulbright Info-Center in Kardzhali

presentations about educational opportunities in the US, the US educational system, admission procedures, visas, testing, the Work and Travel program and many more.

Earlier this year the Commission submitted a project to ECA for expanding outreach to underserved regions and diverse social groups. The project proposal was approved by ECA and the Commission received \$ 15,000. In the summer of 2006 the Executive Director Dr. Julia Stefanova, the financial officer Anastassia Miteva and the educational adviser Snezhana Teneva visited the towns of Kurdjali, Momchilgrad, Madan, Rudosem in south-eastern Bulgaria and met with mayors and municipality workers, high-school principals and teachers to discuss possibilities for cooperation. As a result, two more offices were recently opened in Kurdjali and Madan. Language training for high-school students and local citizens has started along with educational advising. Through the support of ECA and the Fulbright Board the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission is now able to get to underrepresented regions and diverse populations (Bulgarian and Turkish Muslims, Roma population) and offer actual assistance that is much appreciated by the local people.



Visit to Nikola Vaptsarov High School in Momchilgrad



Meeting with Svetla Genova, principal of the Foreign Language High School in Madam

To Chicago and Back

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK?

Stoyan Stoyanov

Stoyan Stoyanov graduated from the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria with a Master's degree in International Relations. This year he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to pursue an M.A. in International Affairs at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

The District of Columbia is different from any other place in the United States. It is different not only because of its status as a capital city, or because of its concentration of governmental institutions. The most important differentiation is drawn by the people who have chosen to live here. During the first days of my arrival in the US, I often heard people say, even Americans, that „the person who knows 3 or more languages is a polyglot; the one who knows 2 languages is bilingual; and the one who knows 1 language is an American“. I quickly found out that this is not applicable for D.C. All the people I have met so far speak at least 2 languages fluently, and they have profound knowledge in various academic and professional fields.

Once the academic year in the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University started, I realized that I had the rare chance to learn from practitioners in the field of international affairs and to study in a highly competitive academic environment. I discovered the



true meaning of the word „location“ while attending the lectures of people who are involved in shaping the political and economic future of the United States, as well as from those who work on Capitol Hill, at the Pentagon, and at other important governmental and private organizations.

There was another word, the sense of which I discovered soon after the beginning of the semester – „hectic“. I have heard friends say that it is difficult to study in a graduate school here; but only after I received my syllabi did I understand why. If you have 4 courses, each course requires that you take part in discussions; read over 150 pages per week; and complete at least 3 written assignments, plus one final paper. (That's about 16 papers for a period of 13 weeks!) You end up with little free time to do anything else but study and read. The nice surprise, however, is that you have a rich library at your disposal, and not only one but a consortium of libraries, where you can find every book you need. You don't even have to leave home, because you can

easily order anything with a just a few clicks of a mouse via the Internet. Other important assets are the excellent computer labs and sports facilities that make your studies much easier.

In such settings, two semesters, or an academic year, have passed in the blink of an eye. Of course, when I look back, there were also some very difficult moments. They were mostly related with the final week of each semester, when I couldn't afford to sleep too much if I wanted to meet the deadlines for the final papers. Now, when I look back, I think it was all well worth it.

Only after the end of the first semester did I manage to explore all that D.C. has to offer in terms of entertainment, cultural events, and historical sites. The population in Washington is a monolithic mixture of different cultures and backgrounds, which mutually complement each other. The most interesting thing, however, is that the divisions based on race, ethnicity, or religion are virtually non-existent. Unlike most of Europe, where fear, hatred, prejudices, and suspicion of those who are different is deeply rooted, here people are judged on their individual merits. Everyone seems to be happy with the opportunity to explore various cultures from all-over the world, or at least experience the taste of various cuisines. (I took particular advantage of the latter.) Now, I often visit Thai and Chinese restaurants; eat piquant oriental rice, sushi or burritos; and enjoy dinner at steak houses, pizzerias, or seafood restaurants. The variety of meals and cuisines is great, and you must experience the tastes for yourself because they can hardly be described. Probably the most popular place to go and experience different cultures is Adams Morgan. This neighborhood is culturally diverse and, besides the variety of restaurants, it is the heart of D.C. nightlife, with lots of bars, disco clubs, and cafes. Here you can also try Bulgarian food and beverages, or listen to Bulgarian music.

Another neighborhood I enjoy strolling around is Georgetown. With its old-style houses, it has preserved the spirit of the pre-20th century United States and the atmosphere allows you to escape from the busy lifestyle of downtown area. Above all stands

the gothic main building of Georgetown University, which is definitely worth seeing. The best place, according to me, is the Waterfront area, only meters away from the Potomac River. There you can sit for a drink or meal with a friend, on some of the lazy weekend afternoons.

Yet, there is no place like downtown D.C. It is not only the buildings of the White House, the Capitol Hill, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund that you can tour. The area abounds with parks, monuments, museums, and of course offices of large corporations like Morgan Stanley, Deloitte & Touche, Merrill Lynch, and many others. On the other hand, the National Mall provides you with an opportunity to take a nice walk under the shadow of cherry trees; enjoy the view of the Tidal Basin and the Reflecting Pond; or take a picture in front of the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. Probably the best view is from the top of the Washington Monument, where you have the feeling that the city lies beneath your legs.

To live and learn a few blocks away from Capitol Hill, the Department of State, and the White House is a memorable experience for everyone who concentrates in the field of international affairs. The opportunity to get in touch with the people who work in places like these and to attend their lectures is a rare chance. Now, at the end of the first academic year, I have been awarded an academic fellowship. I am looking forward to the challenges of my second year at George Washington University. So far, I have tried to serve as a student ambassador of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange here in Washington. I hope I have made some positive contributions to promote the existing perception of the „legendary Fulbright Scholars“. The lifelong experience that I have gained here strengthens my resolution to continue to work for the ideas of promoting mutual understanding through educational exchange. I hope that the knowledge and understanding of the intricate matter of International Affairs, which I am still improving, will help me to fulfill that intention, as well as to build a successful career once I return to Bulgaria.



Out of America

Kevin Allen graduated from the University of Houston with an M.A. in Comparative Politics with a focus on Eastern Europe and the European Union. As well he holds a B.A. in International Relations from the University of South Florida. His AY 2005-2006 Fulbright project focuses on the economic consequences of the directives put forth by the Bulgarian nationalist party Ataka.

There are two forms of education in the world: the theoretical and the practical. Many individuals have doctoral degrees and no practical experience whatsoever while others have a wealth of applied experience with no formal education. Fortunately the Fulbright experience offers individuals an opportunity to augment both forms of education. As such, I will focus primarily on the practical.

The word Fulbright is often associated with a scholar living in a distant land and researching a subject or culture on which he or she is on the periphery. While such impressions indeed have merit, there is much more to a Fulbright Fellowship than just academic research. Rigorous study is undoubtedly an integral element of the fellowship but the firsthand experience of living in a foreign country and learning the norms of the culture is something that can be neither taught nor fully appreciated via the use of textbooks and lectures. This type of education manifests itself in numerous forms including but not limited to establishing residency, finding food and shelter, communicating effectively, and making both personal and professional contacts.

Concerning non-academic education, to be a Fulbrighter means many things. Perhaps the first thing I realized is that it means one must be quite flexible. Irrespective of the fact that one can leave their home country with a well-developed plan of action, cross cultural dynamics often necessitate a change in strategy



and generally an unexpected one at that. For example, I was speaking with a Fulbrighter from a Western European country who thoroughly explained to me how he had spent many months preparing to do research on the Green party in his host country. Despite his meticulous planning, he arrived in the country only to learn that the party had dissolved the previous day. Concerning my own work, shortly after my arrival I understood that there were a number of far more interesting and relevant issues worthy of research; things one could know only by following Bulgarian economic and political developments in the news on a daily basis.

As well, I believe that to be a Fulbrighter in Bulgaria means one needs to be extremely patient. One must be patient when limited communication skills interfere with establishing personal and professional contacts. The inability to communicate successfully may lead to others taking you less seriously than you might prefer. As well, one must be patient when avaricious individuals attempt to take advantage as soon as they recognize that you are not a native Bulgarian. To deal with this effectively, one must develop a preconceived understanding that most taxi drivers will conveniently forget to use the meter or will take a more scenic route to the final destination (regardless of how many times you have traveled that route). In the same vein, many restaurant employees

who recognize that you are from the states will begin to speak to you in English and then share a story of how their brother, sister, or cousin coincidentally lives in the same state that you are from. This may culminate in an unmentioned service charge added to your final bill or the server misconstruing your change as a very generous gratuity. While such instances do not occur daily, they do arise and when they do it is important that one be patient.

Additionally, there are a number of lessons to be learned from dealing with everyone from government institutions to shopkeepers however this is a dissertation in and of itself. Because time and space constraints prevent me from elaborating further I will only say that these everyday affairs can elucidate how much differently things function from one place to the next and have the potential to provide insights as to how much better/worse things may be contingent upon the location.

Fear not though as my time in Bulgaria has not been spent complaining incessantly. I have had the good fortune to learn a great deal about civil society institutions, economics, and politics in the country. My initial project was to measure levels of congruency between the general public and the political elite in regards to E.U. accession however the focus changed and ultimately resulted in an assessment of the demographic nature of those who support the nationalist party Ataka. The project also provides a cost benefit analysis of some of the party's proposed directives including severing ties with the IMF and World Bank, renegotiating Bulgaria's E.U. accession treaty, and reversing the privatization process.

As well, I have had the opportunity to work with a number of non-governmental organizations including the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Next Page Foundation, and the Bulgarian Center for Nonprofit Law. My tenure as an intern at the Institute for Market Economics not only ignited an interest in economics but provided me with the opportunity to gain firsthand

knowledge of how civil society institutions function in Bulgaria. During my time at IME, I have had the opportunity to publish in a variety of media outlets including the *Economic Policy Review*, *Access to Information-Bulgaria*, and *Dnevnik*.

My Fulbright experience has provided me with other opportunities as well. I have had the opportunity to garner teaching experience with the Fulbright Commission's English language club. On another occasion, I was able to give an English based lecture to a group of attorneys and young professionals at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These experiences helped me to fully appreciate the differences associated with teaching in the U.S. and in Bulgaria. Despite my euro-skeptic tendencies, I was given the opportunity to attend an introduction to the European Union seminar in Brussels and Luxembourg. I was able to visit a number of E.U. institutions such as the European Court of Auditors, the European Commission, and NATO. I was able to witness firsthand the manner in which these institutions function and this helped me to realize the disconnect that exists between those who are fortunate enough to visit the institutions and those who can only learn from them through the local media.

In addition, I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people and have established relations that will undoubtedly remain for many years to come. I have grown both personally and professionally. Despite the banal nature of the statement, there is no possible way for me to encompass the numerous positive experiences I have had while in Bulgaria, none of which would have been possible without my Fulbright Fellowship. The most concise way in which I can sum up my Bulgarian Fulbright experience is to say that I have been giving serious contemplation to staying in the country after my grant ends. From such a statement, one can logically assume that it is an overwhelmingly positive experience that has helped shaped the way I think and behave and is one that I would not trade for anything.

The Bulgarian Fulbright Newsletter is published by the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

Please send contributions and comments to:
Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission
17, Al. Stamboliiski Blvd. • Sofia 1000, Bulgaria
tel: +359 (2) 981 85 67 • fax: +359 (2) 988 45 17
e-mail: fulbright@fulbright.bg • www.fulbright.bg

