

NEWSLETTER

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange



Celebrating Partnerships

BEST Intentions = Best Results

**Bridges and Borders:
The Disability Inclusion Movement in Bulgaria**

Numbers vs. Narratives

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Cover photo: US Fulbright grantees and BG alumni with Dr. Aleksander Oscar, president of Shalom Bulgaria

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In Bulgarian folklore, the months of January and February are depicted as *Golyam* and *Maluk Sechko* – a pair of brothers who love the ice and cold and wine! Despite the arctic temperatures here in Sofia, the Fulbright Commission has been going full-steam in these winter months, selecting a new cohort of outstanding 2017-2018 US grantees from a strong pool of applicants. Nevertheless we were relieved

when *Baba Marta*, sister to the Sechkos, arrived, bringing milder temperatures, as well as the traditional Fulbright March 1 *martenitsi* party, where US grantees and Bulgarian alumni traded the red-and-white tassels and bracelets to bring health and happiness for the coming year. Indeed, we will need at the very least good health as well as lots of stamina for our upcoming projects: this July, Bulgaria will host a month-long Fulbright-Hays seminar for 16 educators from American secondary schools, which will address the topic of “Bulgaria in the Context of Migration and Challenges to European Cohesion.” In addition, we have launched a new monthly lecture series for our US grantees to help deepen their understanding of Bulgarian history and culture – this new initiative was kicked off in February by American University of Bulgaria Provost Dr. Emilia Zankina, who delivered a fascinating talk about the Bulgarian political system. Even though Professor Zankina is a hard act to follow, I stepped up to the plate and gave a presentation about Bulgarian musical folklore in honor of March 1.

This March also marked a number of anniversaries – most notably, we celebrated ten years of partnership with the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation, a US-based NGO that offers an annual joint scholarship to a Bulgarian student in recognition of Bulgaria’s efforts to protect its Jews in WWII (see the full article in this issue). This month also marks my two-year anniversary as executive director of the Fulbright Commission – proof positive that time really does fly!

As we finally ease into spring, we wish all our grantees, alumni and partners a healthy and happy new semester – and keep your eyes peeled for storks, wherever you may be in the world!

Best,
Angela

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

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HE US Ambassador to Bulgaria Eric Rubin greets guests, including Shalom Bulgaria president Dr. Alexander Oscar (3rd from left)

Fulbright and Thanks to Scandinavia Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Our Joint Grant

by Angela Rodel

On March 9, at an event hosted by HE US Ambassador to Bulgaria Eric Rubin, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission celebrated ten years of partnership with Shalom Bulgaria and the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation.

The Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation is a US-based non-profit that provides scholarships to students from European countries that made great efforts to save their Jewish populations from the Holocaust. Ten years ago, former Fulbright ED Julia Stefanova, Fulbright board member Victoria Melamed and her husband Victor Melamed – both of whom are prominent members of the Bulgarian Jewish community – approached the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation with the idea of recognizing Bulgaria's efforts to save their Jewish countrymen by jointly supporting one Bulgarian Fulbright student annually. Upon learning about this heroic chapter in Bulgarian history,

the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation in 2007 began generously providing a \$20,000 annual scholarship to a Bulgarian Fulbright student grantee to complete a master's degree in the United States. Alongside TTS partner countries Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, Bulgaria is the only non-Scandinavian country to be recognized and supported by the foundation. In addition to acting as a liaison with TTS, the Shalom Organization of Jews in Bulgaria assists the Fulbright Commission every year in the interview and selection process for the TTS grantee.

The March 9 event was attended by former Bulgarian President Rossen

Plevneliev, high-ranking representatives from the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry and the Sofia Municipality, members of the international and local Jewish community, and current Fulbright grantees and alumni. Dr. Aleksander Oskar, president of Shalom Bulgaria, discussed the importance of commemorating the 74th anniversary of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews, while also not forgetting the more than 11,000 Jews deported to concentration camps from the Bulgarian-occupied territories of Aegean Thrace and Macedonia. Fulbright ED Angela Rodel expressed her gratitude to TTS and Shalom Bulgaria for their partnership over the past decade and read a congratulatory address from TTS Executive Director Kelly Ramot.

The event program included a moving performance of excerpts from "The Diary of Anne Frank" by Aleksandra Georgieva, a ninth-grade student at 51st School in Sofia, where Fulbright/

The Fulbright Program was founded as direct response to the horrors of World War II, including the Holocaust; thus, the Fulbright/TTS partnership is a fine example of furthering the Fulbright mission of fostering mutual understanding between communities, peoples and nations.

ABF ETA Hannah Leib teaches English and coaches BEST speech and debate. This was followed by a brilliant testimonial by Fulbright/TTS alumna Roumyana Mihaylova about her experience “talking to strangers” as a student in New York. The program closed with a striking performance of a passage from Elie Wiesel’s “Night” by Dr. Eva Voltizer, a professor of acting at New Bulgarian University, Fulbright alumna, and member of the Bulgarian Jewish community. The US ambassador’s residence was a gorgeous backdrop for the event, especially since the home was a Holocaust property that had once belonged to the wealthy Bulgarian Jewish family who fled the country on the eve of World War II and asked the US Embassy to purchase the home to avoid it being seized by the communists.

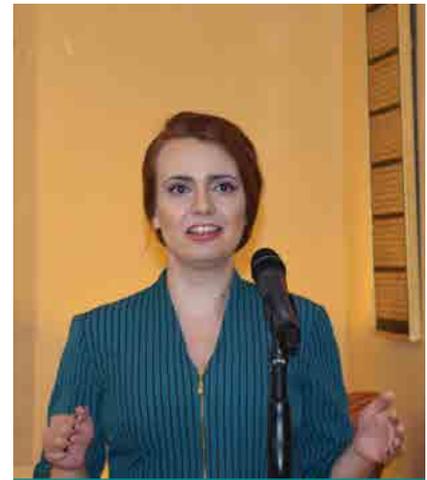
The Fulbright Program was founded in 1946 by Senator James William Fulbright as a direct response to the horrors of World War II, including the Holocaust; thus, the Fulbright/TTS partnership is a fine example of furthering the Fulbright mission of fostering mutual understanding between communities, peoples and nations. The Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission would once again like to thank the Thanks to Scandinavia Foundation for its support over the past decade and looks forward to new decades of cooperation!



Former Bulgarian President Rossen Plevneliev mingles with guests at reception



Professor Eva Voltizer performs an excerpt from Elie Wiesel’s “Night”



Fulbright/TTS alumna Roumyana Mihaylova shares her experience



Aleksandra Georgieva performs excerpts from “The Diary of Anne Frank”



BEST participants from Montana and Blagoevgrad at the regional tournament in Vratsa

The BEST of Intentions Are Now a Reality!

Interview by Iliana Dimitrova, ETA Program Officer, Fulbright Commission

Reid Furubayashi is one of 32 Fulbright/America for Bulgaria Foundation English Teaching Assistants in Bulgaria. After spending a year at Petar Bogdan Foreign Language School in Montana, Reid was one of five ETAs selected to extend his assistantship with another year and moved to Sofia, where he combines his love for teaching with his passion for speech and debate. He now teaches at the 119 Acad. Mihail Arnaudov Secondary School while also acting as the Assistant Director of the BEST Foundation. BEST stands for “Bulgarian English Speech and Debate Tournaments”. The foundation was created in 2012 by six Fulbright English teaching assistants and has hosted 19 regional and national tournaments to date.

Reid is a graduate of Claremont McKenna College, California, and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy, Political Science and Economics, with a minor in Leadership Studies. You can see a video of the interview on our YouTube channel [BulgariaFulbright](#).

Reid, this is your second year teaching in Bulgaria – tell us a little more about yourself, how did you grow up, is everyone in your family such an avid traveler?

No, not everyone is an avid traveler in my family, and I actually grew up in Seattle, Washington, in a neighborhood outside the city called Mount Baker. Growing up, my mom was always invested in our local community and I spent a lot of my time on our neighborhood sports teams or hanging out with kids from

the local public and private schools in my area. I always felt connected to the community I grew up in. And in terms of what you dub “the adventurous spirit” or “an avid traveler” – I think that really stems from the influence of my parents and how they always encouraged me to see the value and the importance in diversity. And not just in racial diversity or socioeconomic diversity but really diversity of thought and perspective, and I think that what they have always influenced in me is this encouragement to try new things and to find spaces that make it okay



to experiment with all that life offers, and that has had a tremendous impact on the path that my life has taken and the choices that I've made up until this point. Without that encouragement to seek out diversity of experience or to try new things I probably, honestly, wouldn't be sitting here in Bulgaria, let alone for a second year, so I think that much of my traveling experience, or my sense of adventure, has really stemmed from my parents and the influence they've had, and the people around me, growing up.

Last year you were teaching in Montana, as a Fulbright/ America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistant and this year you moved to Sofia to take the position of Assistant Director with the BEST Foundation. Why are you so passionate about speech and debate and what made you apply for this position?

I was in speech and debate in high school. At my school, Seattle Academy, the speech and debate program was huge. It was bigger than the sports teams we had, it was the largest extracurricular team at the school, and my coach there cultivated a sort of community around it. As a high school student, trying to find my place socially and finding out who I was a person, speech and debate was a tool that helped me figure that out. I've always had a special place for speech and debate, personally, and then when I came to Bulgaria, I found out that there was already an organization in place that dealt with speech and debate and rhetoric, so I jumped at that opportunity. It played a big part of my integration process in Montana, and really getting to know the students and the teachers there came through coaching the speech and debate team. I think that was the avenue through which I really connected with the community there and it was extremely valuable. So when the option to be an assistant director came out, I was extremely excited. I have to say, though, it was

very tough leaving Montana- I really connected to the people there and the community that the town provided, so the decision was not easy, but I knew that I wanted to deepen my impact within the organization. All in all, I'm happy to be here and I am really honored that I get to take a year to focus on this organization.

Most of the Fulbright/ ABF ETAs lead and coach BEST teams but we know that the initiative is so popular now that many towns and schools that do not have a teacher from America, like you, also have teams and individual competitors. Can you name some of these places where there is a BEST team but no ETA as a coach?

Yeah, that's a great point and that's something that we are trying to cultivate, moving forward, and especially in the last couple of years as the organization has grown significantly and the impact has expanded to reach towns of all sizes and all kind of compositions in terms of the administration's support. Some schools that we have on-boarded recently that do not have ETAs and do not have American native speakers include the 5th Language School in Varna; we also have a team from Tarnava, which is a small village near Vratsa. We have two teams now from Petrich and we also have a team Baba Tonka from Ruse, so we have teams scattered around the country that do not have native speakers but are equally competitive; in fact, the 5th language school from Varna has grown to be our second largest team in the entire organization. So we are starting to see the rise of more Bulgarian-led teams, which is something we're really trying to achieve.

Since its inception in 2012 the BEST Foundation has created a really strong and tight-knit community. Last year I was really impressed at the National Tournament at Sofia University, where we saw many competitors from different towns

saying some really emotional goodbyes. Many of the students were off to study abroad and they were afraid that they may not see each other for a long time. Is there any way that these students stay in touch, are they still in touch with BEST, do they have any role in the organization currently?

Yes, totally! BEST is not an Olympiad, it's not an exam, but it's also more than just a healthy and constructive competition – what it does is it creates a community that gives kids a sense of belonging, or a sense of place within Bulgaria. When 12th graders graduate from this community and this organization it tends to be quite emotional, because they've found their place here or they have connected with students from all over the country. Many of these students might not have been exposed to other students from the opposite side of the country without BEST, so at the national tournament it is always quite emotional for the 12-graders as they say goodbye to their peers. However, now Andrew Malin, who is another Fulbright/ America for Bulgaria ETA in Sofia, handles the alumni relations with BEST which, as we continue to grow, is becoming more and more important. He is setting up events for alumni to stay engaged, to judge at the tournaments and to attend all of our tournaments whenever possible. From the organizational side of things, there are also opportunities for alumni to get involved. Right now as for our management team, a group of people that deals with setting up the tournaments and helps me organize everything, I would say that about 80% of them are BEST alumni. We also have a student internship program that works with 12-graders at certain schools who have competed in BEST and who now help us with the administrative side. There are many professional opportunities as well for students who graduate the BEST community to stay involved.



“I am very grateful to have been awarded the grant for the seminar and encourage all future Fulbright researchers and ETAs to consider applying for this outstanding opportunity.”

EU-NATO Seminar

7-11 February 2017

by **Valentina Tomov, Fulbright US Student**

On a chilly February morning, I made my way to the Central Station in the very heart of the city of Brussels. As I arrived at the station and joined the group of seminar participants, I was welcomed by Elisabeth, our very capable seminar organizer. Despite the gloomy weather, there was much excitement in the group as participants were introducing themselves to each other and were learning about each other’s research.

Before I got on the bus for Luxembourg, I had already learned much about conservation and climate change policies from a Fulbright-Shuman scholar splitting her time between Cambridge and Amsterdam. This was only the first of many intellectually stimulating conversations to come in the next four days. The seminar provided not only excellent opportunities to learn about EU institutions and NATO, but also enabled valuable connections and possibilities for cooperation among US researchers based in Europe.

On the first day, we traveled from Brussels to Luxembourg and after a quick walking tour of the city, we headed over to the US Embassy to Luxembourg. We gathered in the residence of the US Ambassador, a magnificent building with a hundred-year history. There, we listened to the presentation of Dr. Jerome Sheridan, Director of American University’s Brussels Center and a Professor of International Relations at American University. Dr. Sheridan introduced us to EU institutions and informed us of current challenges facing the EU:

Brexit, the new Trump administration, the upcoming elections in Europe (in the Netherlands, France, Germany, and possibly Italy) and Putin’s Russia. He outlined some major differences in the ways US and the EU introduce and enact new legislation. Dr. Sheridan’s talk was followed by a briefing by Daniel Pattarini, Public Affairs Officer, as well as by an official welcome by Daniel Horning, Management Officer at the US Embassy. At the reception that followed the briefings, we had the opportunity to talk to Fulbright alumni who are based in the Luxembourg area and to meet with other staff at the Embassy. As the official program for day one ended, a few of us continued discussions on world matters, the future of the EU, the role of Eastern Europe in the EU, but also on new fiction reads and life in the various European cities we were based in over a delicious dinner at a local Mexican restaurant.

The second day of the program included a visit to the European Court of Justice where we were briefed on case C-177/16 between the Collecting Society of Latvia and the Latvian Competition Authority. While the case concerned rates for music royalties in

Latvia, issues of fair pricing, dominant market position, and questions of whether it was sufficient to compare rates with other neighboring nations, were all relevant and were discussed in the hearing. The case illustrated how challenging the work of the ECJ is. For example, how do you evaluate artists and their music/works of art? Is it fair to use macroeconomic indicators like purchasing power parity to limit rates? What is a fair fine?

Our visit at the ECJ included meetings with Dr. Koen Lenaerts, ECJ President, and with Dr. Paul Nihoul, Judge at the General Court, both Fulbright alumni. The two judges talked about their educational and professional backgrounds and recalled their experiences as Fulbright students in the USA. Dr. Lenaerts informed us of the cooperation between the US Supreme Court and the ECJ, whose representatives meet every three years to stay in touch and abreast of new developments at each institution. After a tasty lunch at the ECJ, our group headed to the Bastogne War Museum, where we learned about the role of the American military in liberating the area from the Germans in WWII.

The third day of the program included a visit to the European Commission where we met with Mr. Ludo Tegenbosch, Member of the Speakers' Team at the Directorate-General of Communication; Mr. Jose Angel Becerra Marta, who represented the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development; and Mr. Ricardo Borges de Castro, from the European Political Strategy Center. The first presentation introduced us to the rather complex structure and decision-making process of the European Commission and informed us of the ten priorities for the EC as identified by President Jean-Claude Juncker. The other two presentations explained the EU's development policy and outlined various aspects of its foreign and security policy. We learned that the EU is the largest donor in the world and that its immediate goals include



Valentina Tomov (second from right) with fellow seminar participants

long-term economic development in the region and eradicating poverty. We were reminded that the EU is a project of peace and its creation had secured the longest peaceful period in Europe since the Romans.

The program continued with briefings at the US Mission to the EU. US Mission officials informed us of their efforts to bring EU and NATO closer together. Their priorities included more productive cooperation between US and the EU on counter-terrorism and assisting Europeans with the creation of a single digital market, which did not disadvantage American companies. At the reception that followed the briefings, we had the pleasure of meeting Fulbright alumni and program donors who worked in Brussels. The highlights of the last day were the program at the NATO headquarters and the visit to the College of Europe. After going through a security check line at NATO's entrance, we were welcomed and briefed by Alison Hart, Executive Officer/US Program Officer at the Public Diplomacy Division at NATO. Ms. Hart talked about the organization's establishment and its purpose, history, and current role in the world. We learned about the security challenges on NATO's priority list and became acquainted with some of NATO's past and present operations and missions.

After lunch at NATO's headquarters

we jumped back on the bus and headed to beautiful Bruges. There, at the College of Europe, we were informed about the College's degrees and heard about a new joint program with the Fletcher School in the US. However, the most interesting part of the day was yet to come. Fulbright-Schuman scholars presented their research to the rest of the group. From analyses of programs and legislation on refugees in Europe, to research on food labeling, political parties, conservation, and comparative law—these presentations demonstrated the quality of research and the expertise of the Fulbright-Schuman researchers. The presentations were the grand finale to an exhausting but wonderful four-day program. Many of us were leaving early the next morning but braved the lack of sleep and joined the group at a Belgium brewery, in order to say proper goodbyes to the people we had come to know and respect over the course of the program.

The EU-NATO seminar was truly a fulfilling experience. I have no doubt that what I learned during the seminar will prove valuable to my research. However, even more valuable is the amazing network of contacts I gained as a result of my participation. I am very grateful to have been awarded the grant for the seminar and encourage all future Fulbright researchers and ETAs to consider applying for this outstanding opportunity.

BRIDGES AND BORDERS:

The Disability Inclusion Movement in Bulgaria

by Elaine Struthers Ph.D., OTR/L

The Fulbright Commission is a program of cultural exchange in which I learned that the borders that separate us as people are not as strong as the bridge of sentiments which connect us.



Elaine Struthers (second from right) meeting with parents

It was early evening and the taxi driver was nosing through an orange autumn fog as we crossed through the countryside toward the bridge that would carry us over the Danube and into Bulgaria from Romania. I had just flown in from the USA and would be teaching in the University of Ruse Occupational Therapy Faculty. The opportunity had come about as the result of a Fulbright Specialist Grant.

During the time I taught in Ruse, I watched this bridge of common interest between peoples expand. I helped train occupational therapy students from Bulgaria as well as interns from Germany and the UK. Many of these students today are providing care and advocacy for people with disabilities in Bulgaria and are the foundation of a strong disability inclusion movement in the country. I was asked to return to Bulgaria to teach a pediatric therapy module each spring, and subsequently I was awarded a Fulbright research and teaching grant in the Department of Special Pedagogy at the University of Sofia. I worked in Sofia with the National Association of Special Pedagogy Teachers, joining in their efforts to include students with disabilities in mainstream schools. We built a special therapy clinic and held trainings for teachers, and helped to launch the profession of occupational therapy as an integral part of school services for children with disabilities. I was invited back in the Summer of 2016 to be the featured speaker at a summer training institute.

As we moved onto the bridge arching upward over the river and fog below, I experienced a strong realization: I suddenly understood that this was not

just a trip across continents, countries, and rivers; I was in the process of building bridges of unity with colleagues from around the globe.

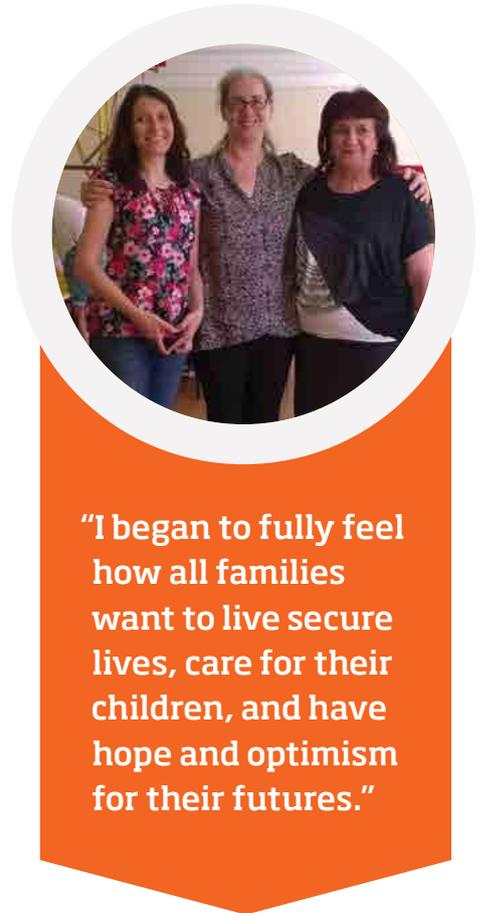
So many people in Bulgaria and at the Fulbright Commission had worked so hard to create this opportunity for me to teach students in the new profession

of Occupational Therapy in Bulgaria. During this time the faculty at the University of Ruse's Occupational Therapy Department (Dr. Liliya Todorova and and Dr. Petya Mincheva) established the Bulgarian Occupational Therapy Association (ABET) to meet international standards and unite therapists within the country. Being able to conduct research and teach in Sofia as a result of a Fulbright Scholarship helped strengthen the objectives of ABET, enhancing communication between institutions. Working with young professionals who would become disability advocates and support the health and well-being of the people of Bulgaria allowed me to bring to the collective table what I had learned and experienced from my own culture and the American educational institutions where I had trained.

Over the years as I returned to support the incredible work of occupational therapists in Bulgaria, I began to realize how many gifts the people and culture of Bulgaria had given me to take home to my own professional practice and personal enlightenment. I felt deeply that in Bulgaria I had done more than teach; I had been honored to participate in nation-building as the country created her own future vision. That was why I was surprised and humbled when, in 2016, ABET contacted me with the news that I

had received an award recognizing my contributions to the field of Bulgarian Occupational Therapy on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the profession in Bulgaria.

The Fulbright Commission is a program of cultural exchange in which I learned that the borders that separate us as people are not as strong as the bridge of sentiments which connect us. As I worked with my colleagues in Bulgaria to support mothers with children with disabilities, I was moved by the family unity, faith, and community solidarity I found. I saw these same forces at work in the United States, even though they were often clothed in different languages, religions, and sense of national identity. I began to fully feel how all families want to live secure lives, care for their children, and have hope and optimism for their futures. Because of my participation in the Fulbright program and in Bulgarian life, my faith in humanity was reignited and I went forward in my profession inspired with a new excitement. After nearly a decade of professional activities in Bulgaria, my interactions with so many people, families, and organizations has enlarged my life for the better. I continue to return to Bulgaria annually to work with persons with disabilities, and my dream is to spend a full year living there just to study the language, which still eludes



“I began to fully feel how all families want to live secure lives, care for their children, and have hope and optimism for their futures.”

me. Despite the spoken language barrier, I found a deeper language of the heart and soul that connects me to the people of Bulgaria, and I feel at home within her borders.

Today in my country there are many obstacles and insecurities about our place in the world, what role and forces we will inhabit, how we will define the meaning of our borders, and what we can bring to the international table. I am very grateful that my experiences in Bulgaria and through the Fulbright gave me the opportunity to share human commonalities with the families in Bulgaria, where I found that our joint yearning as people to improve each other's lives in positive ways far outweighs the divisive ideologies that so commonly tear us apart as people of the world. In these times of global challenges, these experiences shine like a secret light in my soul, inspiring hope.



Elaine leading a workshop at a new therapy center



Stoyan Kiryazov (center) with MBA classmates Varun Harwani and Estella Jin Yongchen

Numbers vs. Narratives: Learning To Think Strategically

by Stoyan Kiryazov

It's snowing outside. I look at my watch – it's almost 2 a.m. It is not the first time I am staying that late at school and by now I know that it is not going to be the last. I stand up from my cubicle to stretch and take a look around to see if there is anyone else in the reading room. As usual, I see James and he sees me. We smile at each other – these long nights at school have turned into "our thing".

Varun, my roommate, is somewhere nearby as well, but I cannot see him at the moment. I start looking for him as I am about to head home and am hoping we can share a walk together. He and I have a lot in common, as we are both coming from the field of finance, so we speak our own language in a way. To be honest, it is not even a proper language, as every sentence is a mumbo-jumbo of numbers, financial ratios and Excel formulas. Tonight, however, I want to discuss something else with him. I want to hear his perspective on a case study that has completely changed the way I evaluate companies' future prospects. But what is so shocking is not the case study itself, but the fact that all these years I have been blind to something that has been right in front of me the whole time. I finally find Varun. He is still working on an Excel model for his financial modeling class, and he is not going to finish it soon. I guess I am walking home alone tonight. I pack up my things and say goodbye to James. The weather outside is frightful and the cold wind is blowing snow in my face, but I am still thinking about the case and barely notice that winter has finally come.

When I was admitted to the MBA program at NYU's Stern School of Business, I was ecstatic. After so many trials and tribulations that I had to go through, it felt like a dream come true. Stern's MBA is one of the top-ranked programs in the world, but what makes it really special is its focus on the field of finance. For me as an aspiring financial professional, it offered the best fit. Also, the school had great positions in the asset management industry, which I was planning to break into after my graduation. All in all, I couldn't have wished for a better place to build on my knowledge and skills.

After the initial euphoria of my admission faded, the time came for me to start planning my first semester. Part of that involved choosing my classes. Even before I was admitted, I knew that selecting classes would be challenging. There were so many great finance classes that I wanted to take and I had only 60 credits to allocate. But what frustrated me the most was the fact that I had to choose three classes from a list of so-called fundamental classes. The first two were easy to select – “Financial Accounting” and “Foundations of Finance”. The third one was very tough – “Strategy” or “Marketing”? After a lot of deliberations, I thought that “Marketing” would probably be less important for my future career, so I decided to go with “Strategy”. But I was certainly not enthusiastic about my choice.

The first two weeks of school were a blur of orientations, presentations and class mingling events. Finally, the time came to go to class. I checked my schedule- “Strategy” on Monday afternoon, the very first day of school. I was not too excited about this, but I was ready to give the class a fair shot before I start judging it. I entered the classroom and sat at the back – my favorite spot because it allows you to track the class discussion better. The professor



You needed the big picture, but the big picture was hidden and you slowly uncovered it by asking the right questions. For me this approach was groundbreaking.

entered and introduced herself – her name was Sonia Marciano. And before I knew it, the class was over. Three hours went by as if they were seconds. What was really strange about the class discussion was that everything we spoke about seemed like common sense, yet it eluded the mind. The only way, it seemed, to get to the truth was by asking the right questions. The problems we were trying to solve were so amorphous and complicated that it was easy to get lost in the details. And there was the catch – the details were only important when you knew how they were connected. You needed the big picture, but the big picture was hidden and you slowly uncovered it by asking the right questions. For me this approach was groundbreaking. As a finance guy, I had been accustomed to focus on the details in order to be able to understand them and weave them into elaborate models that were internally consistent. And now my whole world seemed to be turning upside-down.

After a couple of “Strategy” classes, I was hooked. I wanted to learn more and more about this fascinating field. The language of “Strategy” was the language of frameworks. When I say frameworks, I mean tools that allow you to think in a structured way about an unstructured problem. Those same frameworks give you a perspective

about a problem that is difficult to attain in another way. And I found this new way of thinking fascinating. What added to my interest in the field of strategy was the professor and the way the class was taught – through case studies. Professor Marciano would assign a case to read at home and then we would discuss it for three hours straight, picking it apart and learning the lessons through the eyes of the people and the companies involved in the study.

That snowy December night when I was leaving the school late at night, I had just finished reading one of my last cases for the semester. It was about a company producing tin cans – nothing special as a product, certainly far from being high-tech. How come then the company managed to sustain its profit margins for as many years as it did? How did a company producing tin cans manage to stay in the Fortune 100 list of companies for decades? Those are not questions you can answer by looking solely at financial reports. Behind this success story there is something that can easily elude the untrained eye. What I was thinking that night when I was heading home, however, was not how to answer those questions. I was thinking about the false state of security that I had been living in until that moment. Building financial models and analyzing financial data my entire life, I have slowly and unconsciously put the systematic and analytical approach to truth-seeking at the center of my belief system. And in the process, I have shut the door to everything else that can provide more color or context to financial data. But that was about to change now as I slowly came to terms with the fact that strategy frameworks are not just some fascinating topic outside my general field of interest. They were actually tools that I needed to do my work better.

That snowy night in December I realized that numbers are far from



Stoyan (second from right) with colleagues from Sterns Business School

enough to understand why companies were successful in the past, why they are successful now and whether they will be successful in the future. What you also need is a narrative. A story that you can tell with just a few numbers. It has to be built on sound logic, not just on financial logic, but also operational logic, marketing logic, micro and macroeconomic logic. And above all, the story must tell you where the company wants to go and how it will get there. Before I can even start building a financial model for the company, I have to know the answers to those two questions. Otherwise, I would be just putting numbers in a spreadsheet – and those numbers, although internally consistent, could tell a distorted story, a story detached from reality.

The winter went by and the spring came. Varun and I were sitting in the reading room together working on a company report. This time we didn't start at the company's financials

first, however. We started with an industry overview to see how the company was positioned among its competitors, what the customers' views on the company's products were, how well the management ran the company, what markets the company was trying to expand into and so on. In other words, we wanted to draw the picture first and then color it by using financial data and not do it the other way around. We had learned our lesson – numbers by themselves were meaningless. It was the story that mattered.

This is not just a tale about the importance of the strategy or having a story, however. It is also about me coming to terms with the fact that having deep knowledge in only one field can actually distort your understanding about reality. In my case, that realization prompted me to look for classes outside the financial field that could have a significant added value to my education and to

my professional career. My experience with the "Strategy" class taught me that in order to understand the grand scheme of financial and economic reality you cannot just rely on one set of tools or look through one prism. You need much more diverse knowledge and more importantly, you need to ask the right questions. Thanks to my encounter with the field of strategy, I was able to have a much more open-minded approach when selecting my classes in the remainder of my MBA program. That's why when I graduated in May 2016, I was not a narrowly specialized financial expert, but a person with broader knowledge equipped with more diverse set of tools that made me better prepared for the challenges that stood ahead. My unforgettable MBA journey wouldn't have been possible without the help and support of the Fulbright Commission. I want to take this opportunity to thank them once again for all they have done for me and for my professional development.

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2016-2017

Visiting Scholars

Dr. Valentina Georgieva

Field of specialization: Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Home Institution: Rakovsky National Defense Academy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Texas State University-San Marcos, TX
Spring, 2017

Dr. Vyara Kalfina

Field of specialization: Literature
Home Institution: Sofia University
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Massachusetts at Amherst, MA
Spring, 2017

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoyan Karakashev

Field of specialization: Chemistry
Home Institution: Sofia University
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Illinois at Chicago, IL
Fall, 2016

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radostina Petrova

Field of specialization: Engineering
Home Institution: Technical University – Sliven
Host Institution in the U.S.: Cornell University, NY
Spring, 2017

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Tchalakov

Field of specialization: Sociology
Home Institution: University of Plovdiv
Host Institution in the U.S.: Georgia Institute of Technology, GA
Fall, 2016

Graduate Students

Maria Androushko

Field of study: Film Studies
Home institution: Bard College Berlin
Pursued degree: MFA in Screenwriting
Host Institution in the U.S.: New York Film Academy, LA, CA

Ivaylo Dimitrov

Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Pursued degree: LLM in International & Comparative Law
Host Institution in the U.S.: George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Lyuba Manoilova

Field of study: Archaeology
Home institution: New Bulgarian University
Pursued degree: MA in Classical Studies
Host Institution in the U.S.: Brandeis University, MA

Alexandra Milcheva

Field of study: Public Policy
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Pursued degree: Master in Public Policy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard University, MA

Dilyana Popova

Field of study: Economics
Home institution: University of Essex, UK
Pursued degree: MS in Applied Economics
Host Institution in the U.S.: The University of Maryland, College Park, MD

Atanas Sabev

Field of study: Law
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Pursued degree: LLM in Law
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard University, MA

Mirena Taskova

Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Pursued degree: LLM in Law, Science & Technology
Host Institution in the U.S.: Stanford University, CA

Non-Degree Research Grants For Doctoral Students

Katerina Klinkova

Field of study: Literature
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Host Institution in the U.S.: New York University, NY, Fall, 2016

Kristina Stefanova

Field of study: Law
Home institution: University of National and World Economy
Host Institution in the U.S.: Florida International University, FL, Fall, 2016

Hubert Humphrey Fellows

Ivaylo Vezenkov

Field of specialization: Journalism
Home institution: bTV Media Group
Host Institutions in the U.S.: University of California, Davis, CA; Arizona State University, AZ
Length of Program: 12 months, starting June 2016

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2016-2017

Scholars

David Austill

Field of Specialization: Business Law
Home Institution: Union University,
Jackson, TN

Host Institution in Bulgaria:
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
Sofia

Gene Berryhill

Field of Specialization: Art History

Home Institution: University of
Maryland, College Park, MD

Host Institutions in Bulgaria: National
Academy of Arts, Sofia

Jeremiah Chamberlin

Field of Specialization: Creative
Writing

Home Institution: University of
Michigan-Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, MI

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia
University "St. Kliment Ohridski", and
Elizabeth Kostova Foundation,
Sofia

Michael Musial

Field of Specialization: Music
(Piano)

Home Institution: Russell Sage
College, Troy, NY

Host Institution in Bulgaria: New
Bulgarian University, Sofia

Traci Speed

Field of Specialization: Linguistics

Home Institution: Self-employed

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Shumen
University "Konstantin Preslavsky",
Shumen

Graduate Students

Elizabeth Bews

Field of Specialization: Archaeology
Project Title: Politics and Archaeology
in the Middle Strymon River Valley

Host Institution in Bulgaria: New
Bulgarian University, Sofia

Laura Leddy

Field of Specialization: Art History

Project Title: Historical Topography,
Memory, and Identity in Sofia

Host Institution in Bulgaria: National
Academy of Arts, Sofia

Kate Mower

Field of Specialization: History

Project Title: Apollo Coming into
the Light: Compiling the History of
Thracian Apollo Worship

Host Institution in Bulgaria: New
Bulgarian University, Sofia

Delaney Nolan

Field of Specialization: Creative
Writing

Project Title: The Hills Next Door:
Magical Realism in the Rhodope
Mountain Border

Host Institution in Bulgaria:
Elizabeth Kostova Foundation,
Sofia

Valentina Tomov

Field of Specialization: Cultural
Anthropology

Project Title: Afterlives of Protests
and Imagined Political Futures in
Bulgaria

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia
University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
Sofia

English Teaching Assistants

Jillian Anderson

Field of Specialization: Biology
Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

Anna Brainerd

Field of Specialization: Integrative
Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

Boris Busov

Field of Specialization: Biomolecular
Science

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Sliven, Bulgaria

Erin Coggins

Field of Specialization: Anthropology

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Lewis Collins

Field of Specialization: Theological
Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Razgrad, Bulgaria

Hannah Combe

Field of Specialization: English

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Pravets, Bulgaria

Kenneth Cortum

Field of Specialization: Russian,
Mathematics

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

Kate Cowie-Haskell

Field of Specialization: Anthropology,
Art History

Project Title: Teaching English as a
Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2016-2017

Morgan Ellison

Field of Specialization: History, Russian and Eurasian Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

Emily Enquist

Field of Specialization: International Business, Anthropology

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Reid Furubayashi

Field of Specialization: Philosophy, Politics, Economics

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Lauren Gieseke

Field of Specialization: History, Political Science

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Shumen, Bulgaria

Anna Hernick

Field of Specialization: International Political Economy

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pazardzhik, Bulgaria

Hannah Leib

Field of Specialization: Psychology, Media Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Andrew Malin

Field of Specialization: History, International Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Zachariah Martinez

Field of Specialization: Biology

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Nina Matsumoto

Field of Specialization: Sociology, Spanish

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Galabovo, Bulgaria

Marcus Michael

Field of Specialization: ESL, Linguistics

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kyustendil, Bulgaria

Caroline Murphy

Field of Specialization: Secondary Education

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pernik, Bulgaria

Rachel O'Hanlon

Field of Specialization: Psychology, Japanese

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

Molly O'Keefe

Field of Specialization: Theatre

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Robin Parrish

Field of Specialization: Second Language Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Emily Paxson

Field of Specialization: International Studies, German

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Amanda Petersen

Field of Specialization: English Language Arts Education

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pleven, Bulgaria

Alexa Price

Field of Specialization: International Studies, Government

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Maksim Rusev

Field of Specialization: Accounting

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Dominick Sansone

Field of Specialization: Kinesiology

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

William Smeal

Field of Specialization: Linguistics, Spanish

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

Rebekah Straneva

Field of Specialization: Philosophy, East European Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Helena Tatgenhorst

Field of Specialization: Geosciences, Biological Studies

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Bria Trosclair

Field of Specialization: Anthropology, English

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Wilhelmina van den Berg

Field of Specialization: History, Education

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Jeremy Yeaton

Field of Specialization: Linguistics, French, Chinese

Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Haskovo, Bulgaria

Speech, Singing and Soccer in Stara Zagora:

An Interview with ETA Molly O’Keefe

by Angela Rodel

Fulbright/America for Bulgaria ETA Molly O’Keefe describes the path that took her from her native Baltimore to the town of Stara Zagora on Bulgaria’s Thracian Plains. Her theater degree from Middlebury College, with its interdisciplinary profile that allowed her to study music, English and literature, has helped Molly dive fearlessly into her role as English teacher and speech coach at Romain Rolland Foreign Language High School, where she is a second-year ETA. Her love of music and soccer has also brought her close to the children at the Theophano Popova Orphanage, while fate itself drew her together with Boris...



A: Why Bulgaria?

M: I have always loved Slavic folk music. My father did some Russian and Georgian singing in college, so my family has always listened to Russian, Georgian, and Bulgarian music. When I was 17, I came to Bulgaria with a Village Harmony Music Exchange Program where we travelled around with a choir of singers from the US, met with local ensembles and learned traditional folk songs from them. Then we shared some American shape note songs with the local groups and performed together afterwards. I totally fell in love with the music and the country and have wanted to come back to Bulgaria ever since.

A: What did you first think when you heard “Stara Zagora”?

M: Honestly, I was ready to be excited about any placement! I had never heard of Stara Zagora, but luckily I was working on a theater performance with a good friend who is Bulgarian, so I immediately tracked her down and asked her if she had been here.. She raved about the city, which got me even more excited to come. An added bonus is that Stara Zagora is in Thrace, which has particularly interesting folk music traditions, so of course I was interested to learn more about that.

A: Describe a day in the life of Molly in Stara Zagora.

M: Every day is pretty different, so honestly there is no “typical day”! I usually wake up relatively early, listen to the NPR politics podcast while drinking coffee and playing with my hilarious cat Boris, and then I go to school for the morning shift. In between classes at school, I find time to go for about an hour and a half to the Theophano Popova orphanage (twice a week). I work with elementary schoolers who need some extra help with English, and that is always a total blast. I would say that working with the kids at Theophano Popova has been one of the most fulfilling elements of my ETA

experience. Sometimes my day is over after my time at the orphanage, but often I'm sprinting back to school for classes in the second shift, finishing at about 7. Whenever there is a free minute during the week, and every Friday, I practice with the BEST speech and debate team (it usually adds up to about 10-15 extra hours per week), and if I'm lucky I squeeze in a long walk or jog in one of Stara Zagora's infamously beautiful parks.

A: What has been the most unexpected thing about your ETA experience?

M: A surprising and exciting thing about my experience as an ETA has been the wide range of experience I have been able to have. I am teaching 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade at a high school that really is an elite institution. The students [at Romain Rolland] are quite fluent in English, extremely bright, motivated, and they have a lot of opportunities to participate in exchange projects, to study abroad, and to practice their English in a variety of ways. Then at the other end of the spectrum, I'm also spending a large amount of time with kids from an orphanage, arguably some of the most underserved children in the Stara Zagora community, who are much younger

I think that learning about a country, a people and a language through the lens of its traditional music is a really rewarding experience. Music offers you the chance to feel the soul of a culture. So, I always make time for singing!

and infinitely less confident speaking English, and who unfortunately have many fewer opportunities than my students at Romain Rolland. Both sets of young people are equally enthusiastic, loving, and intelligent, despite the huge differences in their lives. Working with students with such a range of life experience and language confidence has been an extremely fulfilling challenge, both in and out of the classroom, and has allowed me to experience the Stara Zagora community in a much deeper way than I thought was possible.

A: What other projects have you been involved in at your school besides BEST?

I am very lucky that Romain Rolland actively participates in Erasmus-Plus Exchange Programs. Last year I was invited to help facilitate the beginning of a project titled "My Way, Your Way" with students from Italy, Spain, Sweden and Bulgaria.

They all converged in Stara Zagora, and I helped lead the beginning of the orientation with my inspiring colleague Tanya Madjarova. This year, I get to go with Tanya and a group of students to Sweden for a week. It's going to be fascinating to observe the Swedish school system and teaching style, and to continue the discussions about cultural differences that the students began last year. The best thing about these projects, though, is watching the Bulgarian students realize that their English communication skills are much stronger than they thought! They visibly grew in confidence when hosting the international group in Stara Zagora last year: first of all, they had to be the leaders and show the new students all around their hometown, translating for them in Bulgarian, and figuring out how to communicate with students for whom English is also their second language. They all realized: "Wait a minute, my English is really good!" As a teacher, it's amazing to watch that happen.

A: Do you have any time for music? After all, that's what brought you to Bulgaria!

M: I think that learning about a country, a people and a language through the lens of its traditional music is a really rewarding experience. Music offers you the chance to feel the soul of a culture. So, I always make time for singing! One of my favorite things has been getting to sing with my students at Teofano Popova. One of the social workers at the orphanage is a musician, and invited me to



Molly leading an Erasmus workshop at her school



Molly and her BEST team after the spring 2017 Pazardzhik tournament

participate in music classes with the kids. The experience of taking singing lessons with 8, 9, 10-year-olds is rewarding and totally hilarious – they get to take on the role of teaching me the words and correcting my pronunciation and helping me practice. I think they really enjoy that, especially compared to our English classes, where I am obviously the authority. They really like it when our roles can switch and they can say: “Molly, you forgot the words again, didn’t you?” Of course, I also come to Sofia to sing with you and Helena [Tatgenhorst, ETA in Ruse and fellow folk music enthusiast], regularly, which is extremely fun. I’m so glad that you and Helena share my enthusiasm for Bulgarian folk music!

A: Besides folk music, what are your favorite things about Bulgaria?

M: The nature, the opportunities to get outside-- I love the range of outdoor experiences that you can have here: two weeks ago I was in Pamporovo, which feels like Colorado, with deep snow, fluffy powder, and pine trees, but then this summer I was at Heracli Beach, which feels like Hawaii. Aside from the natural beauty, there are also some very unique complications and tensions to observe in the Bulgarian cultural landscape-- living in a place that is constantly caught between East and West.. Also, of course, the food here is out of this world, and the people are very welcoming.

A: Do you have any outlet for theatre?

M: We do improv games and scenes in class-- my theater background definitely influences my teaching style! Outside the classroom, this year in March I am organizing a night of contemporary American theater scenes with students from Romain Rolland. I have chosen scenes from some plays I have been in and some plays I studied in college. I asked some friends in the US who are actors and directors to send me excerpts of plays that they thought would work well for high-schoolers, and the result is a hilarious and heartwarming mix of scenes. We will be performing in the Stara Zagora library, and so far preparations have been going well! Also, BEST, of course, is a wonderful artistic outlet for all of us. I have over 20 students on my BEST team! Duo is by far the most popular event in Stara Zagora-- it is the most fun, in my opinion, and definitely the most theatrical, so it is not surprising that my students and I focus on that because we are all very melodramatic. There are lots of very silly and musical duos coming up in Stara Zagora! And, I actually get to watch a lot of theater here in Stara Zagora. There is a great puppet theater, as well as a regional theater, and other companies often pass through here on tour. I go to the opera, too. Stara Zagora has a really thriving arts scene, and I have been lucky to see a lot of interesting performances, ranging from very

experimental abstract puppet theater to Shakespeare (in Bulgarian). Shakespeare in particular is always really fun for me to watch here because I know the plays so well in English and have performed some of them. I wish my Bulgarian skills were strong enough to perform theater in Bulgarian...this is definitely a goal for the future!

A: Besides theater, another longstanding passion of yours is soccer – do you get a chance to play often here in Bulgaria?

M: When the weather is warm, I play soccer with the kids from the orphanage before or after our English lessons. They are VERY skilled players, so usually it’s a workout for me! Last year, thanks to a generous Fulbright Mini-grant, we were able to purchase soccer equipment and organize a day-long skills clinic where the older kids coached the younger kids, and then they played a friendly match with students from Romain Rolland. This year, thanks to Fulbright again, we were able to bring the younger kids to Panagyurishte to play a friendly match with kids from similar group homes there. At the moment, soccer has fallen by the wayside, because it is so cold and snowy, but hopefully as soon as the snow melts we will start playing outside again!

A: What about the unofficial Fulbright mascot, Boris the Cat?

M: Boris is a total diva and my students think he’s hilarious. This year he made his screen debut in a promo video that the BEST Management Team made! He also appears in classroom materials at the orphanage; for example, at the very beginning of this year we were learning about different animals using big picture cards, so I interspersed pictures of Boris into the mix. The kids were all like : “Boriiiis! *Boris – mnogo debel* [Boris is very fat!].” To which I replied: *Ne e debel – Puhcho!* [He’s not fat, he’s fluffy!].

New Space Entrepreneurship in the US: A Journey to the World of Passion, Perseverance and Endurance

Ivan Tchalakov, 2016 Fulbright Visiting Research Fellow
School of Public Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta

by Ivan Tchalakov

Between September 2016 and February 2017 I had the chance to fulfil my dream of entering the world of the commercial space industry and carrying out research on the community of New Space entrepreneurs in the US. Thanks to Fulbright and the support of my academic colleagues from Georgia Institute of Technology, I managed to establish contacts and conduct interviews with some of the leading space entrepreneurs in US, among them Jeff Greason and Dan DeLong, Tim Pickens, George French and Chuck Lauer, Mitchel Burnside Clapp, as well as some leading space industry corporate managers such as George Sowers from ULA (United Launch Alliance, the joint venture of Boeing and Lockheed).



At Werner von Braun office in Huntsville Space and Rocket Museum

Those familiar with the topic might be surprised by not seeing in the above list the names of some visionaries and businessmen who during the

last ten or more years have indeed revolutionized the old space industry and become celebrities – such as Elon Musk (SpaceX), Jeff Bezos (Blue

Origin) or Paul Allen (SpaceShip One and Vulcan Aerospace). However, my project focused on seeking the *Internet roots* of New Space, while these wealthy Internet moguls and talented enthusiasts have re-installed the figure of ‘heroic entrepreneur’ in the space industry, transferring new models and approaches for doing business borrowed from the IT industry. Yet in November, when I began my interviews with Georgia Tech professors James Craig (School of Aerospace Engineering) and John Krige (School of History and Social Sciences), they turned my attention to the role of smaller entrepreneurial space firms, whose importance is somehow shadowed by a few bigger companies that have received a lot of popular visibility. As Professor Craig said: “You should not look only at big space entrepreneur companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin, Orbital Science, etc., but also at the smaller ones. *Behind each big space company there*

are a hundred small companies that are doing small engineering and R&D services... One such company is Space Works Enterprises, founded by a professor of the Georgia Tech School of Aerospace Engineering.” With his blessing I entered the closed circle of commercial space entrepreneurs, conducting my first interview at Space Work. It was followed by more than ten in-depth interviews – some by phone or skype, while for others I had to travel to the companies’ sites in Midland, Texas and Washington, DC. I also signed up for the Federal Agency for Aviation’s conference on commercial space that took place in February 7-8, 2017, in Washington, DC, and collected valuable, little-known literature and other materials on early US space entrepreneurship.

While the ‘celebrity’ space entrepreneurs have received a lot of popular visibility, the small space entrepreneurs were practically ignored by space policy scientists and have received limited attention from a few talented tech journalists. With each interview carried out, I realized that learning more about their experience could possibly provide a dramatically new perspective on this area of entrepreneurship, and on the space industry in particular. It became clear that fewer people in the world are fully aware of the real achievements of “New Space,” as small space entrepreneurs call themselves, including the long-term consequences of their efforts. As George Sowers, Vice-President of ULA, pointed out, it was these small entrepreneurs’ persistent efforts for more than two decades and their real achievements that pushed the old “Big Space” companies to change their behavior, to speed up innovations and to reconsider “New Space” as their partner, and not only as competitors.

My research became an extremely rewarding experience, since together with my wife Irina we

met fascinating people, some of whom had left well-paid and secure jobs in large companies like Intel, General Dynamics, and even NASA and, following their passion and dreams, decided to embark on the risky business of New Space. We admired the courage, persistence and endurance of these people, from whom we also learned about the value of true friendship and teamwork, which helped them during the long lonely years in their difficult endeavor. But we also learned about *the power of clever public policy* – many of the New Space companies, including the biggest one like SpaceX, could not possibly have survived and achieved their current successes if the US government had not taken timely measures to open the space industry for start-up companies. We should pay our due respects here to the great US President Ronald Reagan, who in 1984 signed the first *Commercial Space Act* stipulating, “one of the important objectives of my administration has been, and will continue to be, the encouragement of the private sector in commercial space endeavors. Fragmentation and shared authority had unnecessarily complicated the process of approving activities in space. Enactment of this legislation is a milestone in our efforts to address the need of private companies interested in launching payloads to have ready access to space” (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39335>). It was thanks to this act and its subsequent amendment that space entrepreneurs got access to contracts with NASA, DARPA, the Air Force and other government agencies; they also received support from Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and other US Government programs, and faced much more favorable and less bureaucratic licensing regimes. All this substantially complemented and encouraged private investments in New Space.

It is my mission now to complete my



An Astronaut
Huntsville Space and Rocket Museum

project and make the world more familiar with this unique American approach to space, which again places the US far ahead in space race. I would like to end this short preliminary account with a few words of gratitude to my host, the School of Public Policy at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, and especially to its chairperson Professor Kaye Husbands Fealing, my project partner Professor Juan Rogers, Assoc. Professor Hans Klein and many others. They provided me with fine working conditions and gave me full access to Georgia Tech’s rich information resources. Our collaboration continues and I am expecting Professor Rogers to lecture at Plovdiv University in May 2017, as he so kindly agreed to do.

And one regret – I did not manage to meet the aviation and space industry legend Burt Rutain, who built and successfully launched the first suborbital commercial vehicle, the famous *SpaceShip One*. I simply did not manage to reach him at the opposite corner of the US in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, where he built his new home after his retirement. But this is also a challenge for the next phase of my research.

Thank you, dear Fulbright colleagues and partners.

The High School of Mathematics “Dr Petar Beron” - Varna

by Iliana Dimitrova

The High School of Mathematics “Dr Petar Beron” in Varna is one of the oldest and most prestigious schools in Bulgaria with over 130 years of history. It has been a partner of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission since 2013 and has hosted four Fulbright/ America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistants so far – Aviva Rosenberg, Mary Wade, Erin Speltz and this year – Kenneth Cortum. Two of the ETAs, Mary Wade and Kenny Cortum, hold a bachelor’s degree in math themselves!



The school was first established in the autumn of 1883 as a State Girls’ High School with four grades. In 1893 it became a High School with six grades and was named “Maria Louiza.”

The original building, designed by architect Petko Momchilov and completed in 1900, was one of the most beautiful school buildings in Bulgaria for many decades. Now it houses the Varna Archeological Museum, showcasing the 7,000-year-old Varna Chalcolithic Necropolis Treasure, which is the oldest processed gold discovered in the world to date.

In 1945 the high school was renamed for Dr Petar Beron, a prominent figure of the Bulgarian Renaissance. The first mathematics class was formed in the beginning of 1963 and since 1971 the school has specialized in mathematics. Besides the compulsory math classes, students also studied Mathematical Logic, Probability Theory, Combinatorics, Descriptive Geometry, Set Theory and others. The school was moved into its current building in 1978. Graduates of the school include many distinguished Bulgarian mathematicians, as well as a beloved poetess – Dora Gabe.

Today the school aspires to prepare over 1,200 students for their higher education in the fields of mathematics, informatics and information technologies and to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to become successful professionals in fields such as programming, advertising, polygraphy and design. To this end, the school’s management strives to seek opportunities for constant improvement of the school’s curriculum and investment in additional teachers’ training and modernization of school facilities. In 2015, the school was one of two finalists in a “Digital Classroom” competition by telecommunications



The original building of the Varna Math School

provider Telenor. The award of 89,967 levs funded equipping a hall with an interactive board, six multi-touch tables with intuitive sensory interface and virtual keyboards, which allow up to 24 students to work simultaneously on a project.

In 2016, the school modernized and transformed outdated classrooms into a natural science center through an initiative supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation for enhancing of the learning environment. The center includes four classrooms and inventory rooms, and their adjoining common areas. The new laboratories are equipped with modern technology and materials for practical work in the respective areas (biology, chemistry, physics, etc). The project aims to create an environment where teachers are able to provoke students' interest in the natural sciences. The school envisions an educational program that offers students a glimpse of real scientific and research

Today the school aspires to prepare over 1,200 students for their higher education in the fields of mathematics, informatics and information technologies and to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to become successful professionals in fields such as programming, advertising, polygraphy and design.

work, while forming key professional competencies and motivating them to pursue professions in the natural sciences.

In line with the school's efforts to prepare students for the future both as well-rounded individuals and knowledgeable professionals, current

Fulbright/ America for Bulgaria English teaching assistant Kenneth Cortum spends a lot of his spare time leading extracurricular clubs which develop students' creativity, critical thinking, self-confidence, research and public speaking skills. Kenny holds a Bachelor degree in Russian and Mathematics and has a passion for Slavic languages – in addition to learning Bulgarian he speaks fluently Russian, Polish and Serbian. Kenny has continued meeting twice a week with the 10-12 members of the school's Gender Club, created and expanded by previous ETAs, where students discuss current political and social events and issues of human and LGBTQ rights. Kenny has also started a BEST Speech and Debate Club at school, which meets for practice once a week. The club took six participants to the regional BEST tournament in Burgas on March 11-12, where four of the students reached the final rounds in various speech categories – original oratory, prose and poetry interpretation.

THE OBAMA LEGACY: *Preliminary Perspectives*

by By Assoc. Prof. Valentina Georgieva, PhD



Dr. Valentina Georgieva (center) with conference colleagues

As a Fulbright Visiting Scholar to Texas State University San Marcos I have the opportunity to get involved in various academic activities organized by the university. On February 2-3, 2017, the university's Center for International Studies hosted a two-day interdisciplinary conference under the title of *The Obama Legacy: Preliminary Perspectives*. More than sixty prominent scholars from universities across Texas and the United States gave presentations and discussed domestic and foreign policy legacies of the Obama administration.

The topics of their presentations included an array of hot issues that have shaped the United States and the world in the last decade: from the Obama economy, through law and national security, US relations with Europe, Russia, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, and the Caribbean, to the impact of Obama policies on the environment, national parks, immigration, education, the role of the women in the armed forces, and the impact of Michelle Obama in the historical context of First Ladies' contribution to the US

society. The sessions that impressed me most were focused on issues related to my teaching at Rakovski National Defense College in Sofia.

Prof. Patricia Shields' presentation *Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell – Hello Women in Combat: The Obama Legacy* presentation reviewed historical changes with respect to the position of women in the US Armed Forces. She also underlined Obama's two major contributions: introducing legislative changes in 2011 which made possible the integration of gays

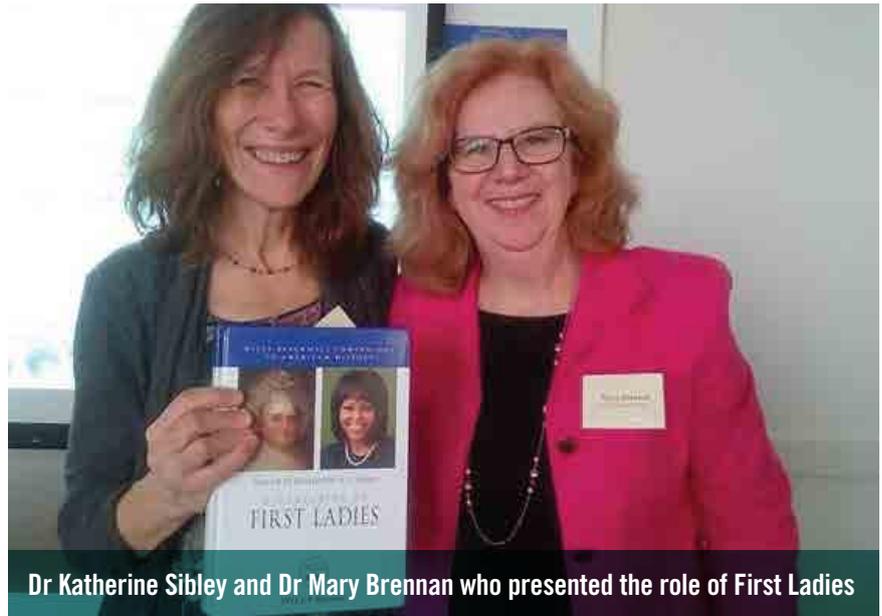
and lesbians into the Armed Forces and the scientific review of military occupational standards.

Presenters who focused their research on Obama's foreign policy and international relations expressed opposing viewpoints. Thus, Capt. Don Inbody (Navy, Ret.) felt pessimistic, foreseeing "aggressive acts of China in the future" and a continuation of "troublesome trends" when analyzing Putin's actions in Ukraine and Crimea, which he saw similar to the actions of the Soviet Union combined with the reluctance of the US to respond more decisively. Dr. Robert Gornam defined Obama's foreign policy in Africa as "mix of successes and failures" pointing to two examples to support his opinion: it was a great success when the US got involved in solving the Ebola threat, but in his opinion US humanitarian assistance was mainly focused on aid to control/decrease the birthrate, and not on investments. Former US Ambassador to Guinea and Ethiopia, Tibor Nagy, underlined as a legacy "the paradigm shift" of seeing Africa in the long run, quoting Obama from his visit to Addis Ababa in 2015: "As Africa changes, I've called for the world to change its approach to Africa. So many Africans have told me—we don't just want aid, we want trade [...]. We don't want the indignity of dependence, we want to make our own choices and determine our own future. As President, I've worked to transform America's relationship with Africa—so that we're truly listening to our African friends and working together, as equal partners". Prof.

Scott Wolford supported Obama's foreign policy Doctrine of "Don't Do Stupid Sh*t" underlying its benefits for the United States: supporting partners' activities rather than initiating use of force activities (e.g. Libya and Syria), enforcing embargo on Russia for the acts in Ukraine and Crimea but not sending troops, withdrawing from Iraq and downsizing the presence in Afghanistan were, according to him, examples of a wise balance of power and an approach opposite to President Bush's.

Despite the personal political affiliations of the presenters, they based their analyses on statistical and objective data, rather than on their emotional attitude towards the administrative initiatives of Obama. This certainly holds true for the presentations in the session on the Obama economy. Prof. Jack Mogab analyzed some aspects of Obama's fiscal stimulus policy (e.g. \$700 billion for Troubled Asset Relief Program [TARP] programs in October 2008, the Dodd-Frank Act, the automotive industry rescue) against the backdrop of the financial crisis and recession and within the framework of a market-dominated economy. He concluded that Obama was supportive trying to expand trade agreements. Dr. Diego Vacaflares presented statistical data to support his statement that Obama "managed well and provided economic stability": GDP increased from \$14.7 trillion in 2008 to \$18.56 trillion in 2016 and from \$48.401 to \$57.300 per capita; the unemployment rate went from 7.8% in 2008 to 4.7 % in 2016.

Prof. Mary Brennan and Prof. Katherine Sibley gave vivid presentations about First Ladies and their informal power. Prof. Brennan described the position of the First Lady as unique, non-elected political position whose power comes from her relationship to the president. She argued that the position many first ladies in the US history has



Dr Katherine Sibley and Dr Mary Brennan who presented the role of First Ladies

For me personally, as a non-US citizen who has not been able to follow the multi-faceted aspects of US life and politics in detail during the last decade, this conference was of great importance for enhancing my overall comprehension of US life and the Obama's administration policy, as well as for enriching my professional and research competences.

depended on three factors: the first lady's relationship with her husband; her personal agenda; and shifting historical circumstances. She pointed out that Michelle Obama succeeded in becoming a role model for African-American children thanks to her activism in promoting healthy eating and moving, as well as a result of using 21st century technology (e.g. she appeared on Sesame Street and in a sitcom, and also danced on a talk show). Prof. Sibley focused her presentation on the legacies of First Ladies and war, recalling Eleanor Roosevelt, who visited around 400 000 soldiers during the WWII; Pat Nixon, who visited Vietnam; Barbara Bush, who celebrated Thanksgiving in 1990 with US Marines in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War; Laura Bush, who visited Afghanistan several times; and concluded with the legacy of Michelle Obama, who set up an organization called Joining Forces to support service members, veterans and their families.

Obama's role in education was presented by Dr William Smith and Prof. Jovita Ross-Gordon. Dr Smith examined the question of Obama's place in the social studies curriculum of state schools and expressed his concern that the current tendency of including instruction on the election of Barack Obama as the first African American President is problematic because a) First implies the problem has been solved, b) Firsts lead to hero worship, c) Firsts promote individualism over collectiveness. For him, the focus in the curriculum should not be on exceptional firsts, but on the benefits from the progress. Prof. Ross-Gordon reviewed Obama's legacy for adult, continuing and community education by highlighting the enforcement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, which is aimed at assisting adults in becoming literate and obtaining the knowledge and skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Love on the Square:

An Interview with Vladimir Levchev **by Angela Rodel**

Most poets write about love; fewer write about the square, the place where community life and political protest take place. Bulgarian writer and poet Vladimir Levchev combines both in his latest book “Love in the Square,” an anthology of love poems and political poems written by the author between 1986, when Bulgaria was still a Communist country, and 2016, in Bulgaria and the United States.



Vladimir began writing in the 1980s and quickly gained prominence as the founder, publisher, and editor of *Glas* (Voice) Magazine, which was banned by the Communist party and was published secretly in the *samizdat* tradition. In 1994, he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to pursue an M.F.A in Creative Writing at the American University in Washington, DC. He stayed in the US for more than a decade, teaching literature and writing at University of Maryland, George Washington University, as well as Bulgarian language at the Department of State. In 2007, he returned to Bulgaria to teach English literature and creative writing at the American University in Blagoevgrad, where he is now associate professor. Vladimir Levchev is the author of fourteen poetry books, three novels, a short-story collection and two books of essays. Five of his poetry books were published in the US, one in Italy and one in Macedonia. He has translated into Bulgarian the works of authors such as T.S. Eliot, Allen Ginsberg, Sarah Kane, Stanley Kunitz and Vladimir Visotsky. He was recently featured as “Poet of the Month” for February at the Sofia City Library. His play “Marko from Prilep,” about the mythical-historical figure of Krali Marko from Balkan lore, will debut at Theater Sofia in January 2018, directed by the acclaimed Bulgarian theater director Tedi Moskov. Fulbright recently caught up with Professor Levchev to ask him about his work:

As a Fulbright scholar, you studied creative writing in English, and you write in both English and Bulgarian – how would you say you differ as an author, depending on the language you’re writing in?

When I moved to the United States, I realized that some of my poems that rhyme or use some play on words are untranslatable. The same words that rhyme in one language don't rhyme in another, don't have the same homonyms that you can use for puns, and in general two synonyms don't mean exactly the same thing even in the same language. And even words with seemingly clear meaning, like the verb "make," can have some totally unexpected usage in another language. (For example, the English phrase "What do you make?" cannot be translated literally.) So poems that rely too much on the music of language or its subtleties are untranslatable. I started writing poems in free verse focused on visual imagery, even on just one visual image or object, like "Herring Gull," "Pigeon," "Cicada," and "A Tree by the Road." Eventually I gathered them in the *Black Book of the Endangered Species*, my second American Book. I was lucky to have the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Henry Taylor as my co-translator, or editor of those poems that I wrote in English.

How does your approach to writing differ between poetry and prose?

In fiction, the characters and the plot are what matter most. Lyrical poetry is about emotions, moods or ideas that cannot be fully interpreted in prose. There are no words for them, so poets express them with images, figures of speech, even the music of language. In this sense, a short story that is more focused on a specific situation or a mood could be closer to a poem than a novel. However, there are also poems that are philosophical, or political, or socially engaged, and they have some common features with essays. There are some such poems in the political part of "Love in the Square." But even a love poem is in a sense "love in the square," because the poet talks publicly about his or her private, emotional, inner life.

It seems that for you, politics and writing have always been intertwined. Your father, Lyubomir Levchev, is also a prominent poet, but he was also well-known as a member of Communist dictator Todor Zhivkov's inner circle. Father-son relationships are always complicated, but how did this dynamic shape your writing?

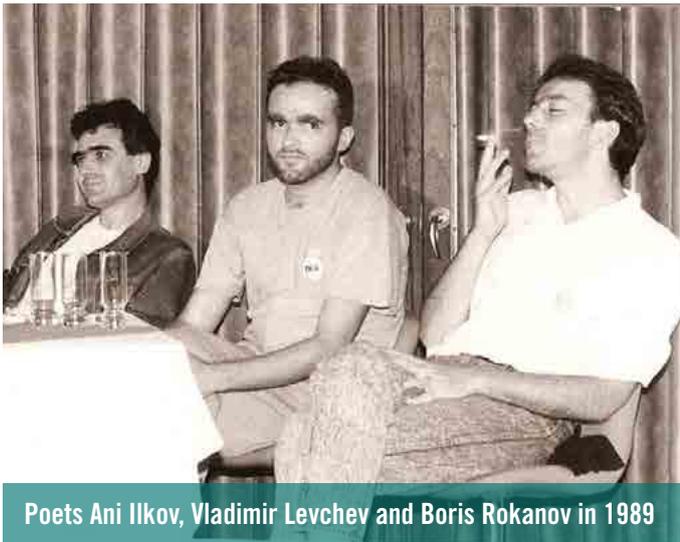
It's always been complicated. I grew up in the family of a poet and an artist, but the poet was also member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Even as a teenager, I started to argue with my father about politics. The story of my poem "Premonition of a Feast" is an interesting example of this. I was 23 when I wrote it, and I submitted it to "Pulse," the Communist Youth newspaper. I didn't have great hopes to receive any response, but to my surprise, the poem was published. Later I realized that it was published in order to compromise my father, who was the Chairman of the Writers' Union at that time. My father was called to give an explanation after the publication and he responded: "My son writes against me, not against Comrade Zhivkov." This is how he defended me, as I understood. He was also a member of Zhivkov's hunting party of intellectuals and also had a Winchester rifle like Zhivkov. The censors rejected this piece for my poetry book "Someday" (1983). By the way, there was also a December Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party, which I also had in mind in the poem. Such things were self-explanatory in those days. Anyway, the fact that I am also a poet, but unlike my father I was never member of the Communist party, and even participated in some dissident groups (they were called "informal organizations" in those days) and published my underground magazine, meant that I was always viewed with suspicion both by my father's political comrades, for whom I was a renegade, and by the anti-communists, especially in the early

"Lyrical poetry is about emotions, moods or ideas that cannot be fully interpreted in prose. There are no words for them, so poets express them with images, figures of speech, even the music of language."

1990s, after the changes, when I was working for Democratsia (the daily of UDF), and then co-founded *Literaturen vestnik*.

Tell us more about your new play "Marko from Prilep" – is this a historical take on your recurring themes of love and politics?

The play is based on my novel *The Balkan Prince*, which was first published in 2000. I wrote it while I was in the U.S., during the Yugoslavian wars of the 1990s. Prince Marko (Krali Marko or Marko Kraljevic) is a prominent figure in Bulgarian, Serbian, and Macedonian folklore. There are songs about him in other countries, too. In the Serbian songs he is usually a great war hero, fighting the Turks, while in the Bulgarian songs he is more of a fantastic hero, beheading three-headed dragons and befriending forest nymphs. He also drinks a lot of wine with his horse... In fact, Prince Marko of Prilep, a town in Macedonia, was a 14th century Turkish vassal and never fought against the Turks. That's probably why he ruled his feudal dominion for many years. The novel, in a slightly ironical tone, deals with this discrepancy between historical reality and folk songs. But it is also about the discrepancy between our spiritual lives and the real facts of our biographies. I also thought that Marco was a typical Balkan hero. I am happy that later this year the novel will be published in Macedonia, too.



Poets Ani Ilkov, Vladimir Levchev and Boris Rokanov in 1989

IN THE STORMS OF CONSTANT PARTING

in memory of Danila Stoyanova (1962-1984)

In the hurricane, amidst the stubble
the bright bluebell, nothing's eye,
is too small for the lightning to strike.
The sycamores, red-hot, hiss in the rain,
a bolt strikes the field, rocks are scalded. . . .
Unable to take cover, the flower stands watch
and at last becomes the blue sky.

Sky – short-lived and fragile flower,
brightened by magnetic storms,
breathing in the darkness, blue atop green,
it flickers, blooms, fades,
beholds the death of stars.
In the horror of the dark cosmos
who blew in the seed of the sky?

Who loves all fleeting things –
a ray of sun, each conception,
the history of the earth itself?
He could be as small as the tear
that brims in your eye
in the storms of constant parting:
a flashing beacon in the sea of death.

1987
translated by the author with Henry Taylor

PREMONITION OF A FEAST (1980)

It is December.
What is Santa bringing
this time?
Alas, there is a lack wild bores,
comrades!
But let's hang our Winchester rifles
on the walls
above the fireplaces
and listen quietly
to the vespers of the pigs
outside
in the evening blizzard...

The pigs — those pink premonitions...
The pigs — those sad angels...

According to the latest findings
they are among the most intelligent mammals:
they are, like humans, omnivorous.
They swallow everything:
the saucers of tasty hogwash,
the flying saucers,
the remains of breaded brain,
the steaks from former brothers...

Everything!
whispers the quire of innocent animals,
We must eat up everything!
Because sooner or later
we also will be eaten for Christmas.

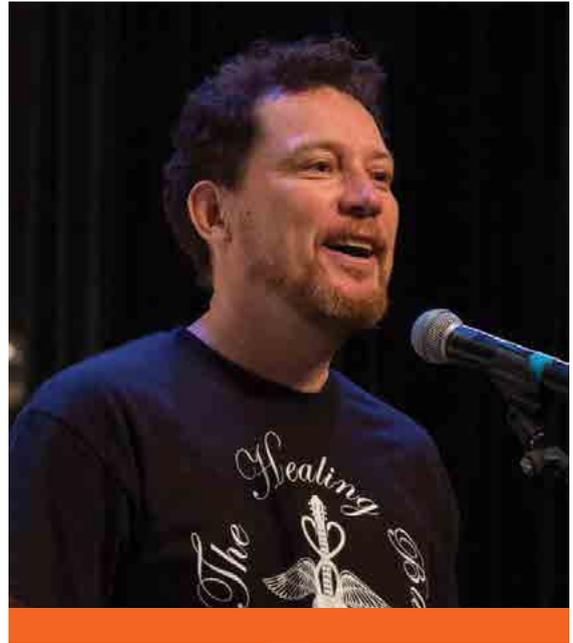
Pigs have a philosophical attitude,
and if their mouths were not engaged
with the music of meat,
they would have warned humans
with such words:
There is universal retribution,
and you, who eat us today,
you are also earmarked for someone's
December feast!

translated by the author

To read more of Vladimir Levchev's work in English,
visit: <http://www.vladimirlevchev.blogspot.com>



In September 2016, **Cascade Tuholske**, Fulbright ETA in Sliven in AY 2011/2012, received a Master's degree in Geography from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He participated in the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting (San Francisco, CA, 28 March – 2 April), presenting a paper entitled The Effects of Tourism on Land Cover and Land Use Change in Roatán, Honduras. In 2016, he was the recipient of the following fellowships: U.S. Borlaug Fellow in Global Food Security; Graduate Student Research and Travel Grant -Broom Center for Demography; Jack and Laura Dangermond Geography Travel Scholarship. His article on How Tourism Changed the Face of Roatán was published by Nasa Earth Observatory: <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=87557>



Ted Efremoff, (Student Researcher AY 2008/2009) is putting the finishing touches on *Mother Tongue*, a 60-minute film created in 2016, which is a linguistic journey down the Danube River exploring the intersections and boundaries of identity, place and time. The film reveals attitudes toward neighbors, outsiders and borders within the Danube River Basin - from its German headwaters to its Romanian/Ukrainian delta. It features nine major languages spoken along the river: German, Slovak, Hungarian, Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian with subtitles in English.

Three poems by **Kaitlen Whitt** (Fulbright ETA in Ruse, AY 2012-2013) were published in *Still Journal*: <http://www.stilljournal.net/kaitlen-whitt-poetry2016.php> Kaitlen Whitt is a third year poetry candidate in Virginia Tech's creative writing MFA program. She has composed stories for broadcast on West Virginia Public Radio and has published poems with *Natural Bridge*, *Appalachian Journal* and *The Blue Earth Review*.

In 2016, **Dr. George Miaoulis**, Professor of Entrepreneurial Marketing and Fulbright Scholar at Sofia University in AY 2013/2014, returned to Bulgaria for a brief visit. While in Sofia, he presented two lectures on cross-cultural marketing at Sofia University's Department of Economics and Business Administration, and at VUZF University; he also supported Fulbright scholar Ronald Harvey in establishing Oxford Addiction Recovery House in Varna. George presented courses in consumer behavior, health care management, entrepreneurship, and new product innovation at Sheffield University / City College in Thessaloniki, Greece. He presented a series of marketing the arts workshops for Maine Artists on Islesboro Island, Maine, a course in Sales Management at Eastern Connecticut State University, and he is currently leading an effort to establish an undergraduate education program in automobile restoration for a major auto museum in the US.

Minka Stoyanov, Fulbright graduate student in AY 2013/2014, is now in her third year of PhD studies. In 2016, she presented an artwork and a paper at the International Symposium of Electronic Arts (Artwork: "Performing Hypo-Linguistics" is a performance that uses EEG brain sensors to allow two artists to create an audio-visual performance. Paper: "Cash Rules Everything Around Me: ..." is available on her Academia account and reads the recuperation of hip-hop culture through Ranciere and Attali). In September, Minka presented a paper "Performing Hypo-Linguistics" at the RIXC Open Fields conference in Riga, Latvia and gave a talk in New York at Theorizing the Web about Gender and cyborgs. She is currently doing preliminary research towards expanding the interviews she made in Bulgaria into a book.



Since returning home, **Priscilla Howe**, Fulbright Scholar at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in AY 2014/2015 has been able to put her research to use in a few ways. In autumn 2015, she developed a storytelling program for children called “Courage, Compassion and Kindness,” which includes the Bulgarian folktale *Baba Metsa i Ioshata duma*. Priscilla presented a performance of the Bulgarian stories she found in her research at the National Storytelling Conference in 2015, at a benefit for the River and Prairie Storyweavers, and in the Kansas City Fringe Festival in 2016. She told two Bulgarian folktales as part of a group performance at the Story Center at Woodneath Library in August. At the 2016 National Storytelling Conference, she presented a workshop on Fulbright for storytellers. She is currently working on a collection of Bulgarian folktales for publication.

Alan Weltzien, Fulbright Scholar at Sofia University in 1997/1998, published two new books this past year: *Exceptional Mountains: A Cultural History of the Pacific Northwest Volcanoes* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2016); and *Rembrandt in the Stairwell*, his third book of poetry (FootHills Publishing, Kanona, NY, 2016). Alan also participated in the annual Western Literature Association (WLA) conference, during which he presented two papers and chaired a panel.

In May, **Dana Ray**, Fulbright ETA in Dobrich in AY 2013/2014 (<http://www.danamray.com/>) graduated with her Masters in English from Bucknell University. Her thesis was a creative project, and she wrote a series of essays about her time in Bulgaria. The project was well received and she is currently looking to place essays in literary journals. Currently, Dana is working with a marketing and design agency, Rowland Creative.

Knox College has named **Dr. Brenda Tooley**, Fulbright Scholar at the University of Veliko Tarnovo in AY 2010/2011 and FISI instructor in 2012 and 2014 as the first full-time director of the College’s Eleanor Stellyes Center for Global Studies. The Eleanor Stellyes Center for Global Studies coordinates study abroad and off-campus programs, brings to campus distinguished guest speakers and scholars-in-residence who provide international perspectives, and promotes international travel and research by Knox students and faculty.

Ruth and David Marshall are now living in Winona, MN, retired, and enjoying volunteering. Dave, a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Veliko Tarnovo in AY 2000/2001, has taught four classes for Winona State University’s Senior University, and will teach another this coming spring on “The Poetry of Peace and War.” Both are serving as docents at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, and Dave is vice chair of the Great River Shakespeare Festival and also helps out with Toys for Kids in the autumn.

In 2016, **Julian Chehirian** Fulbright Student working with New Bulgarian University in AY 2014/2015 returned to some unfinished business from his year in Bulgaria - he filmed an interview that will be a part of a short film about the exhibition and installation he did at the Red House, and the written work from the project funded by Fulbright was just published in an anthology of the Center for Advanced Study in Sofia — *Тялото при социализма* (The Body Under Socialism). He also presented on his research at several conferences: the 2015 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, an anthropology conference at Binghamton University, and he will also participate in an upcoming conference of the Association for Slavic, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies.

This past year **Nancy Bartley**, Fulbright Scholar at the American University in Bulgaria in AY 2012/2013, has been working on a second book of narrative nonfiction. She spent part of the year researching in India and London. Her completed screenplay, based on her first book, *The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff*, won several script contests.

Laurel Isbister (Student Researcher AY1996-97) was recently promoted to be the executive director for the Greater Belhaven Foundation, a small neighborhood organization in Jackson, Mississippi. The organization works to increase livability, long-range planning and economic vitalization of this community. Greater Belhaven is one of the most economically and racially diverse neighborhoods in the city of Jackson. She started her new position on November 9, 2016. Laurel continues to create and perform original music that expresses cross-cultural connections, just as she did during her Fulbright year in Bulgaria.



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