

Polish Lecture Series at FIU



The Polish Lecture Series is the culmination of a long-standing collaboration between the American Institute of Polish Culture AIPC and European Studies/Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE) and School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Florida International University. Over the past four decades, there have been on-going efforts to bring together the university community and the wider Miami Polish community for lectures, films and discussions.

Many of you may not know that Lady Blanka Rosenstiel has been associated with FIU since its inception in 1972. She was also very active during Dr. Gregory Wolf's presidency at FIU. At President Wolf's request together with the late Hanna Saxon, Vice President of FIU, Lady Blanka organized trips to Washington DC. As representatives of newly established Florida International University they knocked on the doors of different Embassies asking for their international cooperation. She was also instrumental in bringing Rob Coles the fifth generation grandson of Thomas Jefferson, who performed on campus his one man play "Meet Thomas Jefferson".

Just to show the continuous collaboration with FIU, here are some of the past events organized together with FIU. In 1999 AIPC and FIU's School of Music, organized "Polish Night" featuring food, music and dance by Polish Highlanders. In 2001 together with FIU's School of Dance and Theater, Poetry Evening entitled "The Heart of Love" was presented. The FIU students and AIPC volunteers, under the direction of Prof. Philip Church and Beata Paszyc, put together an evening of poetry, music and songs. The poetry showcased the poems dating from 16th – 20th century all on the subject of love. The collection of verses included such famous poets like Kochanowski, Staff, Galczynski and Szymbo-

rska. In 2004, thanks to AIPC Professor Norman Davies, world renowned historian, from England, came to Miami and delivered a lecture on the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 as well as promoted his bestseller "Rising 44." In 2007, a Polish-French film festival was organized at FIU. In 2008, the movie "The Legacy of the White Eagle" about Dr. Kulski, Warsaw Uprising survivor, was screened and Dr. Kulski shared his personal war story. In years 2009-2010, three Polish experts visited FIU, SIPA and the EU Center and shared their expertise: Dr. Michael Kennedy of Brown University, Dr. Joanna Regulska of Rutgers University and Dr. Stephen Crowley of Oberlin College. In 2010, Beata Paszyc participated in a panel discussions on "National Identity in United Europe," as well as spoke on "Study Abroad in Poland and Madame Curie – Sklodowska. Throughout the years, the Institute has participated in the international expos and has donated many books and brochures on Polish subjects.

In 2010-11, this long history of collaboration has been brought to new heights with the inauguration of a Polish Lecture Series. The establishment of the Polish Lecture Series became one of the priorities of on the agenda of President Mark Rosenberg. He has been extremely involved and participated in lecture of Prof. Kennedy and introduced President Lech Walesa.

Our thanks and gratitude go to Dr. John Stack, Director of SIPA, Dean Kenneth Furton, Dean Nicol Rae, Dr. Rebecca Friedman, Mrs. Christine Caly- Sanchez and Mr. Paul Landrum ...who have been supportive and instrumental in this project. This effort to expand and deepen the Polish Studies presence on campus is timed with the wider initiative to build international studies and continue to strengthen the new School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), part of FIU's College of Arts and Sciences. ☺

Beata Paszyc

We would also like to thank our donors: Maria and Alex Montague, Drs. Janina and Januariusz Styperek and Lady Blanka Rosenstiel for providing the financial support to make the Polish Lecture Series possible. We urge our members and friends to get involved by participating in the lectures and film showings scheduled for the next academic year and by providing much needed funds to help support the Polish Lecture Series.



Sponsored by:
American Institute of Polish Culture, Inc.
Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland
Shepard Broad Foundation, Inc.
Co-sponsored by the
Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence



Poles and Stalinist Terror

Memory and Oblivion

Beata Paszyc

On November 4, 2010 the inaugural lecture the Polish Lecture Series was delivered by Dr. Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University, specializing in the political history of Central and Eastern Europe. The topic of his speech was *Poles and Stalinist Terror: Memory and Oblivion* and it focused on his just published book *Bloodlands*. In his book, Snyder explains the origins of the killing policies of both Hitler and Stalin and describes their lethal consequences for the peoples between Berlin and Moscow.

The inauguration of the Polish Lecture Series opened with the series of short welcome speeches by Dr. Rebecca Friedman, Associate Professor of History and Co-Director Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence followed by Dr. John Stack, Director of School of International and Public Affairs. They welcomed distinguished guests including Dr. Kenneth Furton, Dean of Arts and Sciences Department and Nabil Achkar, Consular Corps Secretary. Lady Blanka Rosenstiel then welcomed and thanked the audience of 140 people for coming to the inaugural lecture. She emphasized the importance of Polish history and the necessity of sharing the rich heritage of Poland with American and international students.

Following those introductions Dr. Snyder started talking about the Eastern European regions including Poland which were caught between two totalitarian objectives, one being Hitler's vision of racial supremacy, the other, Stalin's vision of communist ideology,



Dean Kenneth Furton, Dr. Timothy Snyder, Lady Blanka, Dr. John Stack, Paul Landrum, Baroness Magdalena von Freytag Loringhoven Sambor

which lead to the deliberate starvation and murder and imprisonment of innocent men, women and children in Gulags and elsewhere. Between the two of them, they killed 13–14 million people in Eastern Europe alone, with Nazi Germany being responsible for about two thirds of the total number of deaths. Over 5.4 million died in a well known event, the Holocaust – but many more died in more obscure circumstances.

Dr. Snyder also stresses many parts of the history that have been “swept under the rug” by propaganda such as the Nazi–Soviet alliance of 1939, the Rescue of Jews by Poles during the Holocaust, Soviet persecution of the Polish underground (cursed soldiers) or their own prisoners of war after the war.

Stalin and Hitler shared contempt for the very notions of Polish, Ukrainian, and Baltic independence, and jointly strove to eliminate the elites of those countries. Following their invasion of western Poland September 1, 1939,

the Germans arrested and murdered Polish professors, priests, intellectuals and politicians. Following their invasion of eastern Poland September 17, 1939, the Soviet secret police arrested and murdered Polish professors, priests, intellectuals and politicians. A few months later, Stalin ordered the murder of some 20,000 Polish officers at Katyn as well as in other forests nearby.

Professor Snyder concluded his very well executed speech with the statement that this was the history of the greatest calamity of our time. ☹

*"A significant work
of staggering figures
and scholarship"*

~Kirkus Reviews, on "Bloodlands"

Dr. Snyder received his B.A. from Brown University and his doctorate from the University of Oxford, where he was a British Marshall Scholar. He has also held fellowships in Paris, Warsaw and at Harvard, where he was an Academy Scholar. A frequent guest at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, he has spent ten years there and elsewhere in Europe. He speaks five and reads ten European languages. His most recent books include: *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke* (2008); and *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010).



Alex Montague, Jacek Kolasinski, Anna Pietraszek, Beata Paszyc, Dr. Stanislaw Wnuk

A Lesson in Optimism for Poles

"Our homeland is not a thing of the past, it's the future."

~the transformation of Poland per Padraic Kenney

On November 22, 2010, in the warmth of sunny Miami, thousands of miles from Poland, Professor Padraic Kenney of the University of Indiana acquainted young Americans with the recent history of Poland and in the same breath, with strength and conviction, gave Poles another reason to be proud of their homeland.

Professor Kenney is the Director of Polish Studies at Indiana University Bloomington, a historian fluent in the Polish language, and an author of books including "A Carnival of Revolution. Central Europe 1989" and "Wrocławskie zadymy."

The historically rich presentation, *The Secret of Solidarity's Success: Poland on the international arena since 1980*, was the second of the Polish lectures at FIU thanks to the cooperation between FIU, the American Institute of Polish Culture and the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland.

Dr. Rebecca Friedman welcomed President of FIU, Mark Rosenberg, Dean Nicole Rae, Dr. John Stack, Lady Blanka Rosenstiel and many members of faculty and students. She stressed the importance of Professor Kenney's participation and was excited about continuation of the Polish Lecture Series.

She then introduced Mrs. Beata Paszyc, Honorary Vice Consul of the Republic of Poland, who prefaced the lecture reminiscing of the tumultuous atmosphere in Poland during the 1980's. She described the social unrest and the participation of Poland's youth in strikes and demonstrations resulting arrests. She talked about the first day of the Marshall Law 1981, which she witnessed as a frightened child and concluded her speech by saying:

"When I look back at that little girl who stood there in fear overwhelmed by the image of a tank, I smile because today I know it was the beginning of an end, end of the power that was to be overthrown. It gives me chills to be able to stand here today to tell you about it and it makes me very proud to be part of the team that has brought you this Polish Lecture Series at FIU and today's speaker."

Later Professor Kenney began the talk on the driving force behind Solidarity's successful transformation of all of Europe. Given the events of the last 30 years in Polish history, it's impossible to be a pessimist or a skeptic, stated Professor Kenney.

Besides pessimism, historians are characterized by love of facts, logic, and cause-and-effect relationships. Consequently, there is a deep reluctance to believe irrational justifications such as fate, destiny, human will or karma. Historians suggest burying these justifications along with romanticism.



Beata Paszyc, Dr. Rebecca Friedman, Dr. John Stack, President of FIU Dr. Mark Rosenberg, Dr. Padraic Kenney

As a result, Professor Kenney is interested in observing the changing position of Poland in addition to the circumstances and events that led to the undisputed success. What made this success possible? A very important question, as this wasn't merely a change, upgrade, or even reform, but a revolution.

Among the factors which benefited the transformation, Professor Kenney listed a series of ideological events and people active in the Solidarity movement: Miroslaw Dzielski, Jan Józef Lipski, Jacek Kuron, Zbigniew Romaszewski and obviously Lech Walesa. Additionally, he attributed the success of the Solidarity movement to the general attitude of Polish society. Given two possible options, dwelling on the past or leaving the past behind them, Poles chose the latter. Instead of dwelling on the past, they turned their sights to a better future.

Misguided patriotism was replaced by careful building of international relations with neighboring countries. Poles abandoned dangerous ethnocentrism categorizing "us" versus "them," a view which, as Professor Kenney pointed out, did not work for the Czechs or Hungarians.

At the same time, Poles did not naively believe in an idealistic history; Professor Kenney did not shy away from acknowledging the failures, which undoubtedly occurred. He noted that disappointment is a natural result when opening the doors to opportunity and revolution.

The presentation by Professor Kenney was not only an interesting lesson in history for the young Americans in attendance, but also a lesson in optimism for Poles. The lecture attended by 80 people was followed by a questions and answers session as well as a reception. ☺

President Wałęsa Guest of Honor

Beata Paszyc

President Wałęsa has been coming to Miami for years now to participate in the *International Polonaise Ball*, during which he presents the *Lech Walesa Media Award* to journalists writing about Poland and her many accomplishments.

During his 2011 visit, President Wałęsa said: "I like coming back to Miami, it is a beautiful city and I like the climate. Apart from that, I think it is very important to meet with Polonia here. It is beneficial to all of us; I give them my point of view coming from Poland and I learn about their experience as immigrants in the US."

When President Wałęsa was asked if it is not too tiring to talk to so many people and pose for pictures, he replied with a smile: "Not at all! This is what it's all about, people come by and ask questions and I try to answer and try to spend couple of minutes with everybody, and they remember those

conversations. Those meetings unite Polonia and encourage Polish Americans to get more active in promoting Poland."

Before President Wałęsa delivered his speech at FIU he was invited by Dr. Mark Rosenberg, President of FIU as a guest of honor to his residence at Regan House, for a special dinner. The short list of guests included Mrs. Rosalind Rosenberg, Ambassador Martin Paolus, Lady Blanka Rosenstiel, Dr. Rebecca Friedman and Piotr Gulczynski.

President Rosenberg thanked President Wałęsa for accepting the invitation and expressed how delighted and honored he was to have President Wałęsa at FIU for the very first time. He extended words of gratitude to Lady Blanka Rosenstiel and Beata Paszyc for making this possible and assured his continued interest and support in developing a strong relationship and creating an exceptional program for the Polish Lecture Series. ☺



Francisco de la Torre, Katarzyna Zielinska, Dr. Mark Rosenberg, President Lech Walesa, Lady Blanka Rosenstiel, Beata Paszyc, Dr. Rebecca Friedman, Lorraine de la Fe

"Those meetings unite Polonia and encourage Polish Americans to get more active in promoting Poland."



Dinner at the residence of Dr. Mark Rosenberg

"I think it is very important to meet with Polonia here. It is beneficial to all of us; I give them my point of view coming from Poland and I learn about their experience as immigrants in the US."

Lech Wałęsa visits FIU

Sven Kube



President Wałęsa delivering a lecture at FIU

On February 11, 2011 the FIU community welcomed President Lech Wałęsa with record enthusiasm. All 480 seats of the new SIPA Ruth K. and Shepard Broad Auditorium were filled more than a half an hour before the start of the lecture entitled *Poland and the World in the Age of Globalization: Values and Challenges*, which was part of both the Broad Lecture Series and the Polish Lecture Series sponsored by EU Center of Excellence at FIU, The American Institute of Polish Culture and Mr. Alex Montague and Mrs. Maria Alonso. President Wałęsa attracted a standing room only crowd, including a couple hundred more people in the overflow rooms watching Wałęsa on the screen. The Noble Peace Prize recipient gazed out into the crowd and said, with his famous good humor: "I am honestly surprised that so many of you came to see a politician." The crowd, made up of students, faculty, and community members from all walks of life, smiled and applauded.

To many in the audience, Wałęsa is a modern-day hero. Nine years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wałęsa led strikes in Poland, forcing the Socialist government into allowing free labor unions. When the Soviet Union increased its pressure on the Polish government, the leader of Solidarność (Solidarity Movement) was imprisoned in 1981 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize two years later. In 1990, Wałęsa

became the first democratically elected president of the Republic of Poland and supervised the country's political and economic transformation.

While the younger guests in the audience know his face from history books, many others view him as the liberator of Poland, a fighter for democracy and greeted him enthusiastically with standing ovations. "Thank you. Now I have to work really hard to achieve the same appreciation," smiles the former president.

Wałęsa began his remarks with reflections on post-war Europe, displaying an authentic sense of Polish humor even

when he talked about the gravest tragedies in Polish history. There is still a tangible sentiment of sorrow when he recalls how his country fell to the sphere of Soviet influence after World War II. It should not have happened, he says, "for we really are textbook democrats: If you have two Poles, you have three parties." His words continued to visibly move the audience.

The former labor leader devoted a significant portion of his speech to the transformation of his country into a Western democracy. He cited the papacy of John Paul II, which began in 1978, as a beacon of hope for all Poles and a great inspiration for those struggling to resist Communist oppression. At the same time, the former Solidarity leader had somewhat critical remarks for his contemporaries and architects of political change in the late 1980s, most notably Mikhail Gorbachev. Wałęsa argued that Gorbachev's efforts to implement a policy of incremental modernization were doomed from the start: "There is simply no way to reform Communism," ...you remove one element and the whole system comes apart. Gorbachev tried, and he failed brutally. He did not preserve Communism.

He did not preserve the Soviet Union. He did not preserve the Warsaw Pact." Wałęsa's passion and charisma filled the new auditorium.



Standing ovation after the lecture

However, his message is not that radical change is a universal remedy but that failure should never result in resignation: “It is natural: We will encounter failures when we change the world.” Wałęsa addressed the complex dynamics that have replaced the relatively simple balance of the two superpower camps and called for a period of global reconsideration. He suggested that the younger generations and the most brilliant minds should combine their efforts to determine where the world was headed. Directed at the many young Americans in the audience he said: “Do not forget this, you are the superpower!”

Wałęsa turned to the role of the EU in initiating change and taking up the mantle of global leadership. The EU, he explained, is currently in a challenging situation, having to reconcile its expansive ambitions with the implications of a substantial economic and monetary crisis. Wałęsa recommended that Europeans should make up their minds about what kind of economy and democracy they desire in the long run. “People nowadays think less about democracy than they used to,” Wałęsa mused. “But China is coming up impressively fast. If we do not prepare ourselves for this kind of competition, who knows—maybe we will have to join China at some point,” Wałęsa joked. Much to the amusement of his audience, he also has

a piece of logical advice for his fellow Europeans: “Get to work and make at least twenty children per household!” Wałęsa made sure to also emphasize how much has been achieved since the fall of the Iron Curtain. “We have so many countries and languages, and the number of borders has been decreasing so rapidly and constantly,” he marveled. “If my father raised from his grave to find that there are no soldiers at the border shared by Germany and Poland,” the former activist insists, “he would suffer from a second heart attack.”

After his formal remarks, President Wałęsa patiently answered all questions asked about his personal life as well as about greater issues of world politics. The date on which Poland’s former President visited FIU to talk about liberation could not have been more fitting: only hours before he stepped up to the microphone on February 11, the long-standing dictator Hosni Mubarak had been ousted by the people of Egypt who desired freedom—just like Eastern Europeans did some twenty-odd years earlier.☞



President Wałęsa receiving a medal from FIU Dean Kenneth Furton, with FIU President Mark Rosenberg



Piotr Gulczynski, President of the Lech Walesa Institute, Beata Paszyc, Dr. John Stack



Morris Broad