

Skalny Center

FOR POLISH & CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES

In August 2002, following my year as a Fulbright professor at my alma mater, the University of Warsaw, I arrived back in Rochester to enter the new beautiful offices of the Skalny Center on the first floor of Harkness Hall. My own office now has two windows – a visible sign of success.

Professor Kathleen Parth had worked as the Skalny Center's director during my absence, and I wish to extend to her my sincere and deep gratitude for her dedicated and selfless work. Since she is the director of the Russian Studies Program, I am very happy to see and to continue the fine tradition in Rochester of Polish and Russian friendship.

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Skalny Center

FOR POLISH & CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES

Kazimierz Rzażewski, Visiting Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy and The Institute of Optics UR, and Professor at the Center for Theoretical Physics, Polish Academy of Science and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University

After the Second World War, a number of prominent Polish physicists returned to Poland although, as a rule, they had a much better chance of survival outside than inside of the war-torn country. They started teaching and building research groups in several major universities in Poland. However, the Stalinist freeze and terror prevented them from opening vital links to the international physics community.

The leading theoretician at Warsaw University was Leopold Infeld. A prewar coworker of Albert Einstein, he was chased away from the University of Toronto in 1948 after accusations in the press that he was a Soviet spy. Upon his return to Warsaw, his pedagogical talents and his broad knowledge of physics helped to build a strong postwar group of theoretical physicists at the University of Warsaw. Infeld's students were my teachers. As soon as Stalin's era ended, physics in War-

saw opened up to the world. In 1958 the first Polish physicist, Iwo Białynicki-Birula, came to Rochester to work with Robert Marshak. Soon his wife Zofia, also a physicist, joined him. Others followed. In fact, the University of Rochester served as a gracious host to a particularly large group of Polish physicists. One of them, Adam Kujawski, became a friend of a young assistant professor, Joe Eberly. Soon Joe visited Poland for the first time and became an untiring sponsor of visitors from Poland at UR.

At this point, it is worth noting that geopolitics played a large role in this scholarly collaboration. In 1956, supporting the promising political changes in Poland, the U.S. government sold grain to Poland and accepted the payment in (non-convertible) Polish zlotys. After several years, the decision was made to use these funds in zlotys on carefully selected projects in Poland. Among oth-

How Wonderful Our Kids Are!

Impressions from Polish Youth Concert and Youth Art Exhibition



It was Sunday, April 6, the weekend of the 2003 Ice Storm. The state of emergency was still in effect in Monroe County and thousands of people did not have power. And yet, the Memorial Art Gallery auditorium was almost full at 1:30 p.m. when the Annual Polish Youth Concert was about to start. All participants, unimpressed by the weather, were

Jan Lencznarowicz, Skalny Visiting Professor of History, UR

Are American students interested in Polish history? For years I have been teaching the history of Poland to foreign students at the Jagiellonian University, both in the Institute of Polish Diaspora and Ethnic Studies (former Polonia Institute) and in the Summer School of Polish Language and Culture. But in January 2003 as a Skalny Visiting Professor, I arrived in Rochester to teach a class on Polish history and I was not sure if the subject would attract students. It did. Twelve participants turned up and they worked hard throughout the semester. Most of them were history majors.

My introductory course provided a panoramic overview of more than 1,000 years – from the formation of the Polish State to the collapse of Communism. Of course, a millennium of Polish history was placed in a broad European context. In fact, the history of Poland is not an isolated phenomenon, but constitutes an integral part of Europe's past and ought to be taught as such. Still, despite remarkable improvements in recent decades, too often American history graduates, even those familiar with the history of France or Germany, are surprised to learn about the Kingdom of Poland in the Middle Ages or the role of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th centuries. For them Europe ended in Germany. There had been nothing further east until the 18th century when all of a sudden the Russian Empire emerged. Sometimes they believe that "Poland as a nation" was created by the Treaty of Versailles. Their acquaintance with the history of other countries in the region is similar. No wonder that some American politicians and media perceive this part of Europe as a "new Europe."

However, a considerable and, it seems, increasing number of students is eager to develop knowledge of Central European history. Some want to rediscover their ethnic heritage, others motivated by their intellectual curiosity branch out to less-known areas of Europe, while for many the most important factors are the present political and social transformations in the region and its integration with the European Union. Thanks to the activities of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, students at the University of Rochester can take courses not only in the history of Poland, but in other fields



By Krzysztof Polakowski

Once again this year, Rochesterians enjoyed the opportunity to witness an extraordinary musical event: a thrilling performance given by the Cracow Klezmer Band at the Memorial Art Gallery. We listened to the brilliant quartet of young virtuosi skillfully playing accordions, violin, bass, clari-





This newsletter is a publication of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies at the University of Rochester. Studio AtJarek has provided design and production assistance. If you have questions or comments, please contact the Skalny Center:

Ewa Hauser, Director

Contact Information:
Bozena Sobolewska,
Administrative Assistant
(585) 275-9898
ewa.hauser@rochester.edu

Skalnycpes@mail.rochester.edu
Skalny Center for Polish and
Central European Studies
101 Harkness Hall
Box 270147
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY 14627-0147
Fax: (585) 506-1952

Studio AtJarek - Graphic Design
254 West Ridge Road
Rochester, NY 14615
(585) 254-5315
info@jarek.com

U N I V E R S I T Y O F
ROCHESTER

Skalny Center for Polish and
Central European Studies
Department of Political Science
University of Rochester
P.O. Box 270147
Rochester, NY 14627-0147