

SLAVIC NEWS

WINTER 2009

Slavic Languages and Literatures, Box 353580
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Seattle, WA 98195-3580

LETTER FROM CHAIR GALYA DIMENT

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As I write, the calendar year is quickly winding down. The year has been one of changes, for us as well as for the nation, and we anticipate more in the coming months, not all of them to our liking. We are certainly not immune to the world's and the state's economic woes. While we are hopeful that the governor and the legislature will recognize the UW's importance to the state and spare us a harsh scenario, we recognize that here in the Slavic Department it will not be "business as usual" for the foreseeable future. Even though this newsletter is paid for out of our discretionary account rather than from State funds, the decision to send it out was not made lightly. We anticipate that we may be dipping into our discretionary account more and more to make up for lost State revenues, even to cover such mundane but necessary things as office supplies, copy expenses, etc. It is likely that in order to save money this newsletter will now come out just once a year.

On the positive side, in early November we received the long-awaited "Ten-Year Review" from the Graduate School. Overall, the report was very favorable, and it even called us "a jewel." It also rightly acknowledged areas in which changes are needed, especially in our graduate program. I would again like to thank all our majors, grad students, affiliate, adjunct and visiting faculty, staff, alums and members of the community who met with the committee or communicated with them in other ways.

Another cause for celebration was the Deans office's recent recommendation to the Provost's office that Jose Alaniz be granted tenure and promotion. We are confident that Barbara Henry's case will meet with equal success when it is presented to the College Council later this year and look forward to having these two colleagues with us for many years to come.

The new year will see the Slavic Department's offerings in language instruction expand to include Slovenian (for the first time ever). Affiliate Professor Michael Biggins will be teaching an accelerated introductory course over two quarters (winter and spring), designed primarily for students who already have a working knowledge of another Slavic language.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Martha Golubiec and Tom Podl for their service in chairing the Polish Studies Endowment Board for the past five years. I also want to thank Sheila Charles and Krystyna Untersteiner not only for co-chairing the Polish Studies Auction Committee for the past couple of years but for stepping up to take over as Martha and Tom's replacements. This year we are once again enjoying the fruits of this group's labors as we host Fulbright Scholar Przemyslaw Chojnowski.

With appreciation for the support of all of you and wishing you all a happy and healthy 2009!

CONVERSATION WITH VISITING LECTURER PRZEMYSŁAW CHONOWSKI

by Phoebe Ambrosia

Before arriving in Seattle last fall, this year's visiting lecturer, Dr. Przemyslaw Chonowski was an Assistant Professor in Polish and Classical Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Dr. Chojnowski is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship for 2008 and has been working with the University of Washington's Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies program and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

We sat down to talk about the upcoming lecture he'll be delivering as a part of the month-long film and lecture series, "Polish Heroes: Those Who Rescued Jews," set to take place during January and February 2009. "Irena Sendler's Children" will be the title of Dr. Chojnowski's lecture on Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in Kane Hall, room 220, on the University of Washington campus. The lecture series is free and open to the public.

PA: Can you tell me a little bit about Irena Sendler?

PC: Yes, Irena Sendler, or "Irena Sendlerowa" in Polish, was a Polish woman; she died this year in May. She helped save many lives and also organized others to save lives as part of the Polish Underground and Żegota resistance group in Warsaw. At the end of her life, Polish schools were named after her, commemorating the great work she did rescuing Jewish people in Poland during the occupation. In my lecture I will be describing the difficulties in hiding these people, because you needed about ten people to hide just one child.

In Warsaw in late 1940, one year after the war broke out, the Nazis created a ghetto where Jews were forced to live. This was one of the largest ghettos of all; it became famous because of the uprising of the Jewish people who did not want to be slaughtered like lambs. The Germans began bringing people to the concentration camps, and the Jewish people fought back.

Irena Sendler, a nurse, was a very courageous person; because she was a nurse, she was allowed to enter the Jewish ghetto and bring medicine to those living there. Several Polish convents and Catholic nuns helped her as she tried to protect the children in the ghetto. An easy way was to get a certificate of baptism for an infant or a small child; this proved that they were a part of the Catholic Church and could not be taken. This made hiding infants quite easy. On the other hand, small children who were old enough to talk, i.e., 2-5 years old, were not aware of the danger they were in. Imagine you are a passenger on a train and a child is speaking to you in Yiddish when everyone else on the train is speaking Polish, even the child's parents. 80% of Polish Jews spoke only Yiddish at the time of the Second World War. They had not assimilated into the rest of the Polish community. If a child on a train is crying and calling for its mother in its mother tongue, it is immediately obvious to everyone on the train and to the authorities, so this made it difficult. Then, of course, many times Jewish parents did not necessarily want to give up their children to protection by the Catholics. There is an expression in Polish: "hope dies last."

We don't know how many children Irena Sendler managed to save, but as many as 2500 people she helped kept in touch with her over the years after the war. When she died this year, people from all over the world sent in their condolences and came to remember her.

Descriptions of the courses Dr. Chojnowski will be teaching during winter and spring 2009 appear below. Both courses will be taught in English.

WINTER 2009: SISRE 590 A: German-Polish Relations: Literature and Politics

In the work of most Polish writers there are often references to the historically troubled German-Polish region, particularly in the 20th century. The image of Germany and the Germans within the political context of the postwar period as reflected in literature will be discussed. Another issue is a new approach to the German cultural heritage in Poland after 1989 and the issue of multiculturalism in this part of Europe. In particular, the following topics will be addressed: the attitude to Germans in the poetry of Tadeusz Rozewicz; fascination for German culture in Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz's poems; Germany as an enemy in *Conversations with an Executioner* by Kazimierz Moczarski; the evolution of the enemy image in the prose of Andrzej Szczypiorski (*The Beginning*); divided Berlin in the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert and Ewa Lipska; the discovery of the past in former German provinces incorporated into Poland after 1945 (Stefan Chwin, Pawel Huelle).

SPRING 2009: POLSH 420: Polish Jews and the Holocaust in Literature and Film

This course covers representative prose works by leading 20th-century Polish writers. Students will examine literature's critique of modern European civilization, historical memory, collective victimization, and the utopian imagination in Polish literature, and the relation of these to political power and national survival.

AUTUMN 2008 POLISH STUDIES AUCTION by Krystyna Untersteiner, Auction Co-Chair



On a warm and sunny October morning, a dozen Committee members, their spouses and friends came to the UW Club to set up for the Polish Studies auction. Four hours later we proudly surveyed our accomplishment: tables laden with beautiful jewelry, gorgeous Boleslawiec pottery, baskets of wines, art, a variety of gift certificates... We were ready for the big event. When we returned in the late afternoon, the dining room looked spectacular against a backdrop of Lake Washington and golden hills of the East Side. At sunset people began to arrive. Soon there were over 60 guests, UW and high school students and other volunteers, and Patrick O'Brien, our intrepid

auctioneer. The evening included a silent auction, a warm welcome by Tom Podl, live auction, dessert dash, a talk by Professor Dziwirek, and a very touching speech by student Emilia Ptak, recipient of the 2008 Student Scholarship. The event took place a day after the biggest economic crash in modern history, but the generosity of our guests exceeded our expectations.



The auction brought in over \$22,000 in sales and donations, including \$5,000 for the scholarship fund. Thanks to the kindness of all who contributed - donors, procurers, volunteers, and guests - the UW PSEC Endowment Fund reached \$150,000; the Scholarship Fund has over \$16,000 and we have funds to continue the Distinguished Speakers Series and finance other projects. Dziękujemy! Thank you!



POLSKA I JA by Emilia Ptak

One of the alluring traits of travel is the promise of new adventures. I have recently returned from a two-month sojourn in Poland, where every moment was an adventure. I was taken by Poland. I spent six weeks studying the Polish language at Uniwersytet Jagiellonski in Krakow, along with two weeks visiting the cities of Torun and Wloclawek. Like a sponge I soaked in Poland. I was immersed in the culture on every sensory level. Taking lunch at a bar mleczny, where soup was always a must, even on sweltering 85 degree days, waiting for the tram, visiting the farmers' market, speaking, reading and listening to Polish. I was completely absorbed and loved every aspect. My babcia taught me how to make pierogi ruskie from scratch. Having created the dumplings with my own hands, I understand and appreciate the significance of this defining food of the Polish cuisine as an integral part of the culture. All of my experiences helped me to forge a relationship and strong bond with Poland.

Since my father is Polish, Poland had always been a part of my identity, but without my consent. I inherited an identity which was foreign to me until I spent time in Poland. After experiencing the country for myself, I can comfortably claim my identity as a Pole because a connection was made. I made a deliberate choice all my own to discover that identity. What it means for me to be Polish is my own doing. I feel empowered, for my perspective, my scope, my entire being has broadened. I have opened up to the world.

There was no goodbye when I left. I knew I would be back, because when one is at home in a place, return is inevitable. A place that leaves its mark never leaves you. It is a part of you. Poland is my home.

Poland is a vital component of my life. Now that I am removed from the immediate culture, I crave its presence. There is a need for interaction between the culture and myself to take place on a daily basis. It is a way of life, a way of being. I am able to engage by utilizing the language, which I find to be nourishing, sustaining, and satisfying. Practicing the language fulfills that need. I have recently begun taking language classes at the Polish Home. I am enthusiastic about my academic studies about a place I cherish and have come to call my home. My two-month sojourn marks a defining point in my life, and I look forward to the many adventures still to follow.

POLISH STUDIES SPEAKERS SERIES by Ewa Poraj-Kuczewski

After the summer break, the UW Polish Studies Endowment Committee returned with the Distinguished Polish Speakers Series, whose purpose is to publicize the accomplishments of Poles and promote Polish culture. The two fall lectures took place at the Simpson Center, a perfect venue for smaller events, giving the audience an opportunity to connect closely with the speaker.

On September 18, General Miroslaw Hermaszewski, who in 1978 flew aboard Soyuz 30, gave a very interesting lecture about the history of space travel and his own experience as the first and only Polish astronaut.

The hour spent with the cosmonaut provided everybody with rare impressions of the circumstances of space travel, the first successes and failures when hastily prepared missions put everything at extreme risk, the canine cosmonauts that were sent out before people and after for special experiments, the misconceptions about life in space and how astronaut and cosmonaut teams were finding practical solutions. (Tomasz Seibert)



General Miroslaw Hermaszewski with Captain Alexander Herbst, photo R. Kott

The high point of the evening was the encounter of two space eagles: General Hermaszewski and one of the last living WW II Polish fighter pilots, Captain Alexander Herbst.

Conscious of the fact that I was facing a General, I reported myself giving name, rank and numbers of squadrons in which I had served. He beamed, pressing my hand hard. After all, we were both from the same Polish Air Force Academy, only he had been there twice, once as a cadet and then as Commandant.

Well aware of the history of the Polish squadrons in the R.A.F., the General was attentive to details and incidents filling out his knowledge. Of particular interest was the development of the fighter aircraft battle formation mastered by Polish fighter pilots and used later by English and American squadrons.

Much of the story of space flight as related by him was known to me, but the General added details of which I was not aware. What struck me was how even-handed he

was in describing the achievements of both the Americans and Russians in the Space Program. There seems to be an esprit de corps erasing national differences among these “birds of a feather,” which I found most appealing. (Alexander Herbst)

In October the UW Polish Studies Endowment Committee presented Dr. Anna Niedzwiedz from Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where she teaches cultural anthropology. Her lecture, “Our Lady of Czestochowa: religious or national symbol of Poland?,” focused on the symbolic meanings connected with the image of the Black Madonna in Polish culture and popular religiosity. Enhanced by ethnographical examples that revealed the complexity of this religious image, the presentation held a strong appeal for the audience.

The lecture shed light on an important aspect of Polish culture and national identity. I was in awe of the Lady, who in many respects is treated as one of the family in Polish households. I saw in Our Lady of Czestochowa an ideal that not only provided communal unity and national identity, but also touched each individual with a personal experience. I understand now why she was so important throughout Poland’s tumultuous history, and why she is held in such reverence today. (Bridget Swirski)



Dr. Anna Niedzwiedz at the Simpson Center, photo Ewa PK

I like to refer to myself as “Polish-American since 1902” and have traveled to Poland twice, once to study the language, once to study Warsaw.

On October 21, I attended Dr. Anna Niedzwiedz’s presentation on the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. I did not want to miss the opportunity to learn more - from anthropology/religion/art history perspectives - about the famous image of She who protects my 90-year-old grandma in Pittsburgh,

She who I believe is capable of displays of synchronicity both subtle and miraculous. I have not (yet) been to Czestochowa, but I think that anywhere in Poland you find the Black Madonna, you feel Her power. Even if you understand only one word of Polish in a hundred.

I encourage anyone with curiosity about Poland to enrich their lives by going there: to hear the language, to see the landscape, to feel the history. Until you can get there, buy some Chopin CDs and be grateful to organizations like the UW Polish Studies Endowment Committee for bringing Poland to Seattle! (Julianne Crowl)

The upcoming season of Polish Studies events will begin with a January/February exhibit, “Polish Heroes: Those Who Rescued Jews,” at Suzzallo Library accompanied by a series of five lectures.

Opera aficionados are invited to Seattle Opera’s production of Bela Bartok’s “Bluebeard’s Castle” with Polish mezzo-soprano Malgorzata Walewska on February 28th. A \$100-per-person donation will include an opera ticket and a reception the next day with Ms. Walewska. To make reservations, please contact Ewa PK at ewaporaj@q.com or call 206.362.3829 by February 10, 2009.



General Hermaszewski with guests and Committee members, photo R. Kott

NEWS FROM YOU

Gwyneth Kozma (formerly **Gwyneth Barber**, BA 1996) has been living in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, for the last 5 years, working for the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. She is Chief of the Eurasian Outreach Division of the Outreach Programs Directorate, which plans and conducts conferences and seminars throughout Europe and Eurasia. In 2005 she married a Hungarian police officer who currently works in Bosnia for the European Union Police Mission. They have a 2-year-old daughter, Geneva Elizabeth, and another daughter due in March.

Candace Faber (BA 2005) writes, "I'm finally in Poland, working as a cultural attache at the U.S. embassy in Warsaw (where I learned that our Fulbright Commission helps fund the UW Chair in Polish Studies! Small world). I run speaker programs, cultural programs (bringing artists, speakers, musicians from the US), promote study in the U.S. and English language teaching, among other aspects of our public diplomacy. It's a lot of fun."

Emily (Fields) Saunders (MA 1997) writes in: The big news from our end is the addition of kid # 2. Julia Saunders was born just before Thanksgiving, ensuring that her birthday will fall ON Thanksgiving in future years from time to time. We're quite pleased with our new acquisition, though her older brother Henry remains somewhat guardedly suspicious.

Antonina Gove worked as Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Vanderbilt University until her retirement in 2003. "The Russian program was left with two faculty members—Kostya Kustanovich and David Lowe. We have enjoyed teaching some wonderful students.

"When Walt retired two years later, we moved to a small town in a beautiful remote setting in Southwestern Utah. I have volunteered in a one-room library, which a group of us revived. Our town now also boasts a book club. I do Tai Chi while Walt hikes on the mesas. I have volunteered in an archeological museum in a small state park, cataloging new holdings and inventorying old ones. It involved counting and describing a large number of potsherds and "points" from a site that was occupied until about 1100.

"Our daughter, Nancy, earned a Ph.D. in statistics and has held jobs in Anchorage, working on populations of fish, and later at NOAA in Seattle. Currently, she is at Boeing, having given up fish ecology.

"Son Nathan earned degrees from Stanford and Berkeley and is currently at Edinburgh, Scotland, writing a dissertation on conflicting ecological and housing construction claims that have surrounded the few surviving Florida panthers. Both children will join us for Christmas."

Richard House (MA 1976) "Recent events? Did I move? H.m.m.m. how many times have I moved? I've lived back here in New Hampshire since 2002, working as Director of the Language Resource Center at the University of New Hampshire and sometimes teaching Russian. As a matter of fact, this next Spring 2009 semester, I will be teaching a Literature in Translation course for Ron LeBlanc while he goes on sabbatical (to Seattle, no less).

"It turns out that Slavic Linguistics prepares one for the rigors of trouble shooting the myriad ways in which an individual user can run into difficulties with a blend of university servers, differing browsers, and a variety of computers. The ability to sequence the thought processes has a good deal in common with the Transformational Grammar I learned 25 plus years ago with Herb Coats."

Andrew Inniss (MA 1994): Nothing too exciting to report. I did start a new job in October. I'm now working for the government: the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. That's the latest incarnation/name for the welfare department. David is now in grade 1 and is in the French Immersion stream. Dania is in preschool. Teresa is still teaching, though half-time since after her mat-leave with Dania.

Mary Anne Kruger (BA 1970) completed her three-year assignment as U.S. Consul General in St. Petersburg, Russia, this summer and returned to Washington, D.C. "Just before leaving Russia, I fulfilled a long-time dream to visit the remote Solovki Monastery and former gulag camp. Also traveled to Tot'ma and Velikiy Ustiug in Vologda Oblast, whose native sons established the Russian settlements in Alaska and California. Now I am working on the Board of Examiners of the State Department, giving the Foreign Service oral assessment to hopeful new diplomats. I trust some Slavic L&L students will be among the candidates. While in San Francisco in October I visited Fort Ross, CA."

Nancy Luther (MA REECAS 1986) writes, "My work at the SABIT (Special American Business Internship Training) Program at the U.S. Department of Commerce emphasizes trade with the countries of the former Soviet Union. I speak Russian daily with people in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and occasionally with participants in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

"As a senior in high school, my son Yuri got an "A" in advanced Russian at GWU, where he will attend college in the fall."

After spending 5 days in a coma, another 10 days in the hospital, and 6 weeks recovering at home, in October **Janet "Zhenya" Miller Anderson** returned to work as an attorney in Vancouver. "Having learned something from my brush with death, however, I am now semi-retired and enjoying life immensely. ☐I would love to hear from my Russian Housemates from the summer of '66 and the school year '66/67."

Since moving back to Poland over 6 years ago, **Geoff Schwartz** (PhD 2000) reports that he has a lot of news, "perhaps more than would fit in the newsletter, but here are two main highlights:

Sept 19, 2006 - The birth of Filip Schwartz, who already speaks perfect Polish.

"This coming January - The publication of my "Habilitationsschrift" entitled "Phonology for the Listener and Language Learner" by the Wydawnictwo UAM in Poznan. Once that is defended I will receive "habilitacja," which is more or less the Polish equivalent of tenure."

Cheryl Spasojevic (BA 1967) is now in the fifth year of working with the Children's Home "Mladost" in Kragujevac, Serbia, on projects funded by the American foundation, WorldWide Orphans.

“For four years we had an ongoing project entitled “Return to the Future” (Povratak za Buducnost), working each year with a new group of 6 teenagers living in the home. The aim of the project was to help these kids reconnect with their past - parents (if living), grandparents, foster families, siblings, teachers, etc. - in order to build a more secure foundation for moving forward in their lives. The vehicle for this was the medium of digital photography. We supplied 3 digital cameras for this purpose. The kids had ongoing classes with a photographer who helped them learn photographic skills. The psychologist for the Home worked closely with the teens, both in preparation for the visits to their pasts and in debriefing them afterwards. The teens truly blossomed in the process of the project, becoming much more secure and grounded, and were able to deal much better with the pain of being a “Home kid.” Each group of 6 also learned to trust and support each other, forming a cohesive unit from individuals who had often been isolated and/or antisocial. In addition they learned photography and computer skills that they will be able to use all their lives.

“A second project that lasted for one year was “Stariji Brat/Sestra” (Big Brother/Sister), a mentoring program teaming unemployed and retired educational workers with academically struggling

youngsters. The project showed measurable improvement in the school grades of the participating children, as well as individual personal growth and socialization by them. Even though the foundation is not continuing to fund this program, it was so successful that it is being continued by the Home and the local Center for Social Work.

“The third project is a direct outgrowth of the first one. Namely, the foundation is providing scholarships for the continuing higher education of teens who participated in the Return to the Future project. Currently, there is one young lady from the very first group studying to be a pre-school teacher at the Pedagogic Faculty in Jagodina. Another young man is preparing to enroll in college next fall.

“Jill Cole of Seattle was Program Director for most of the time and is still actively involved in these projects. My role in all of these projects has been as liaison and translator (and general whip-cracker!). It is a very satisfying and rewarding activity knowing that it is truly making a difference for these young people in Serbia.”

GIFTS

The gifts the Department receives from alumni and friends are of immense value and provide a much-needed element of flexibility to meet special needs as they arise. We are truly thankful for these contributions, and below we recognize the generosity of individuals and businesses that have contributed in the past six months.

The *Southeast European Studies Fund (Balkan Fund)* is now a reality! This new fund was officially established on November 6, 2007. Its formal purpose is “to sustain the program in the SE European area by supporting graduate students with academic interests in the languages and cultures of this area.”

Anonymous

James E. Augerot

The *Czech Studies Endowment Fund* was created to support students studying Czech language at the University of Washington.

Sara D. Votipka

The *Friends of Slavic Languages and Literatures Fund* may be used at the discretion of the Department Chair. Gifts to this fund are invaluable, enabling the department to allocate funds wherever the need is greatest. This fund is used to cover the costs of producing this newsletter. Contributors to the general fund include:

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Like the Friends Fund, the *Institutional Allowance* may be used at the discretion of the department to support its various activities. The annual Outstanding Undergraduate Award and Outstanding TA Award both come from this fund. A special subset provides the Nora Holdsworth Scholarship to the winner of the annual Olympiada of Spoken Russian.

Mike Storosh

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The *Lew R. Micklesen Graduate Fund* supports graduate student programs in the Slavic Department.

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Roman Begej

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We welcome your comments.

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