



# THE POLISH LECTURE SERIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

BY PROF. KYRILL KUNAKHOVICH

During the 2016-17 academic year, UVA's Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (CREEES) organized three events as part of the Polish Lecture Series at UVA that focused on the theme of "Poland and the World." The American Institute of Polish Culture has rightly pointed out that, "Poland has contributed in important ways to Western civilization," and the lectures aimed to explore this contribution by emphasizing Poland's impact on world affairs. Each talk focused on a different region of the globe - Europe, Asia, and North America - and in so doing, engaged scholars and students of these regions, and introduced new audiences to the global significance of Polish history and culture.

In November 2016, CREEES organized a talk by Dr. David Petrucelli, then a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (and now Assistant Professor of History at Dartmouth College). Dr. Petrucelli's work explores the emergence of international networks for fighting transnational crime in the 1920s and 1930s. His talk, "The Samuel Lubelski White Slavery Trial of 1914," explained how central the Polish lands were to this story. The town of Myslowice, where the three Polish Partitions met, became a center of human trafficking on the eve of the First World War and the site of a major trial that codified international law on migration. Dr. Petrucelli's lecture attracted nearly fifty students, faculty members, and outside visitors, including Dr. Agnieszka Pasiicka from the University of Vienna and President of the Polish Studies Association.

In March 2017, CREEES welcomed Dr. David Tompkins, Associate Professor of History at Carleton College. Dr. Tompkins is the author of *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany*, published by Purdue University Press in 2013. His current project explores the communist construction of friends and enemies in the Stalin-era Soviet Bloc. Dr. Tompkins' talk, entitled "The East is Red," focused on Poland's relationship with the People's Republic of China. It examined Poland's cultural outreach to China led by traveling ensembles like *Mazowsze* and highlighted Poland's significance as a global cul-

tural beacon. Dr. Tompkins' talk was followed by a lively discussion with roughly forty students, faculty, and community members in attendance.

Later in March, CREEES hosted Dr. Małgorzata Fidelis, Associate Professor of History at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Dr. Fidelis is the author of *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland*, which appeared with Cambridge University Press in 2010 and in a Polish translation in 2015. Dr. Fidelis spoke about her new project, entitled "The Sixties Behind the Iron Curtain: Youth Culture and the Global Sixties in Poland," which featured numerous illustrations from periodicals like *Dookoła Świata* and *Ty i Ja*. It demonstrated that Poland was a major player in the construction of global youth culture, spreading a distinctive brand of modernity around the world. Dr. Fidelis' audience of forty included Dr. Michel Pawlowski, Polish Studies Chair for the Institute, who took an active part in the discussion and subsequent dinner.

CREEES is deeply grateful to the American Institute of Polish Culture for making these talks possible. With their support and generosity, the Polish Lecture Series at UVA has become a center of intellectual exchange and scholarship on campus. This is evident from the number of programs and departments that have co-sponsored the Series' events - the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Corcoran Department of History, the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, the Center for German Studies, and the Center for Global Inquiry and Innovation. Lectures in this year's Polish Lecture Series at UVA attracted faculty from across the university, including specialists in Media Studies, South Asian Studies, and American Studies. They also introduced more than one hundred undergraduate students to Polish history and culture. Such encounters embody the AIPC's mission to "share with all Americans the rich heritage of Poland." We thank the Institute for its continued support and look forward to fruitful collaboration in the coming academic year.