Scholars Team Up to Discuss Poland’s Environment

The Polish Studies Center and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs sponsored a conference entitled “Environmental Protection in Poland and the Region,” March 31-April 2, 1996.

Sessions were held at two locations on the Bloomington campus, SPEA and the Union Conference Center. Following the Bloomington sessions, conference participants spoke to university and community audiences in Indianapolis and South Bend. The conference then continued at the Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, on April 2, where sessions were joined by people from state agencies and private environmental firms and organizations.

Several faculty from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and from Butler University also took part, and the Hudson session was officially greeted by IUPUI Chancellor Gerald L. Bepko. The conference was organized by Timothy Wiles (director, Polish Studies) and Daniel Cole (School of Law, Indianapolis), an expert on Polish environmental law.

At the conference, experts from Poland, Russia and the U.S. discussed the environmental situation in the region from economic, political and social perspectives. The first formal conference session was held in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs on March 31. Four SPEA master’s students gave lively presentations drawn from their field work in Eastern Europe and the NIS, providing an introduction to the issues discussed during the rest of the conference. Following the Sunday afternoon session, SPEA Dean A. James Barnes, formerly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, hosted a reception for all conference presenters and participants. Monday’s schedule was divided into five main sessions. The first session, moderated by Kerry Krutilla (SPEA), provided an overview of environmental protection efforts in the region from a variety of perspectives. Speakers included Michael Toman (Resources for the Future), Cole, and Roman Zlotin (Central Eurasian Studies).

Energy policy, air quality, and rural and urban ecologies were the topics of the second session, moderated by William Hojnacki (SPEA). Presenters included Lech Ryszkowski (Research Center for Agricultural and Forest Environments, Polish Academy of Sciences) Robin Bates (World Bank) and Piotr Poborski (Institute of Ecology of Industrial Areas, Krakowie).

Matthew Auer (SPEA) moderated the third session on environmental law and economic instruments. Jerzy Jendroska (Research Group on Environmental Law, Polish Academy of Sciences) and Jerzy Sleszynski (Warsaw University) discussed some recent developments in legal reform and enforcement, and the use of instruments like fines and charges, incentives for clean-up (i.e., forgiveness of fines), and some debt-for-nature swap arrangements which are currently in effect between Poland and some Scandinavian countries and also the U.S.—but which, it turns out, Germany has not yet agreed to join. Sleszynski spent a month at IU this spring on the Distinguished Faculty Visitor program organized with Warsaw University, giving several talks on environmental topics.

Daniel Cole moderated the fourth session on privatization and the environment from economic, legal and business perspectives. Speakers included Boguslaw Fiedor (Oskar Lange Academy of Economics), Ruth Greenspan Bell (Environmental Protection Agency), and Susan Cummings (Creditanstalt-SCG).

This final session focused more centrally than hitherto on the dimension of society. The main topics were

Conference delegates at the Hudson Institute, April 2, 1996, from left to right: Timothy Wiles, Jerzy Sleszynski, Lech Ryszkowski, Robin Bates, Susan Cummings, Piotr Clinski, Ruth Greenspan Bell, Boguslaw Fiedor, Piotr Poborski.
environmentalism, related social movements within postcommunist society, and sustainable development, which sometimes registers as the new ideology of the environmentally conscious economic thinking in Poland, and sometimes seems like a new social contract for the emerging postsocialist society.

Barbara Hicks (UNC) moderated presentations by Piotr Glinski (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology), Zbigniew Bochniarz and Richard Bolan (both from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, U. Minnesota). Glinski spoke on “The Polish Greens as a Social Movement,” the topic and title of his recent book, while Bochniarz and Bolan delivered their paper titled “Institutional and Policy Reforms for Sustainable Development in Poland.”

Tuesday, many of the conference participants traveled to the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis for a panel discussion moderated by John Clark (Hudson Institute). Bates and Cummings gave brief overviews of energy policy and privatization, respectively. Participants then discussed these issues in more depth in order to draw some conclusions from the conference and the many discussions over the course of the conference.

These conclusions, and the papers presented, will be compiled and published as a book by the conference co-organizers, Cole and Wiles, as well as Clark.

At the close of the conference, two Polish experts visited Indiana University South Bend to discuss Polish environmental matters with campus and community audiences. Sleszynski and Glinski met with two groups on Thursday, April 4, and they toured Chicago’s Polish neighborhoods on April 5. Their host in South Bend was Hojnaoki, who arranged for a community roundtable on environmental developments in Poland, and brought Sleszynski and Glinski as guest lecturers to Rick Brown’s class on environmental policy at IUSB.

The OIP held a reception to recognize the contributions of the local international community to the Global Speakers Service (funded by an Indiana Humanities Council grant). Among the international outreach staff are Anjali Sengupta, Kathleen Fox, and Maha Nour-Eldin.

Jewish Identities Conference

In Mid-March, a distinguished group of Jewish scholars from Israel, Europe, Australia, and the United States met in Bloomington for a two-day conference, “Circles of Community: Collective Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932.” It was convened by Derek Penslar (History, IUB), with George Alter (Population Institute) and Benjamin Nathans (History, IUB) presiding as chairs of the sessions.

The themes of the conference dealt with the tremendous social, political, and cultural upheavals experienced by Jews in those countries during the 1920s, the association structures that were established and carried over into the inter-war era, comparisons between the formal Gemeinde and the informal Gemeinschaft, and the influences which both strengthened and weakened Jewish expressions of community during that period.

The academic sessions brought together leading scholars from the United States, Israel, Australia, and Europe. Conference speakers and participants from abroad included Avraham Barkai of Kibbutz Lehavot Habashan, Jacob Borut of Yad Vashem, Tobias Brinkmann (Technische Universität Berlin and Freie Universität Berlin), Karl Christian Fuehr (Archive für Sozialgeschichte), Claudia Prestel (Monash U.), Peter Pulzer (All Souls College, Oxford), and Shulamit Volkov (Tel Aviv U.).

Other conference speakers and participants included Michael Brenner (Brandeis), David Ellenson (Hebrew Union College), Todd Endelman (Michigan), Harriet Freidenreich (Temple), Peter Fritzche (Illinois), Sharon Gillerman (UCLA), Jack Jacobs (John Jay College, CUNY), Steven Lowenstein (U. of Judaism), Marion Kaplan (CUNY), Michael Meyer (Hebrew Union College), Marsha Rozenblit (Maryland), Chancellor Ismar Schorsch of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Lee Shai Weissbach (Louisville).

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