



# Copernikano 2005

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF MICHIGAN  
COPERNICUS  
ENDOWMENT

▶ Brian Porter (right) with U-M students in Kraków

I have just returned from taking a group of University of Michigan undergraduates on a month-long trip to Poland — a trip made possible by the generous support of the Copernicus Endowment. Our study-tour, “Many Polands,” focused on the rich legacy of cultural diversity in northeastern Europe. The students learned that Poland’s current religious, linguistic, and ethnic homogeneity is a relatively recent development, and that “multiculturalism” was an every-day reality in Poland centuries before it became a buzzword in the United States. In addition to the usual lineup of glorious Polish destinations (Kraków, Częstochowa, Lublin, Gdańsk, Warsaw), we visited some special out-of-the-way sites that exemplify Poland’s diversity: the village of Bohoniki, where Muslim Tatars have sustained their faith and community for more than 400 years; the Orthodox shrine of Grabarka, to which the faithful have made pilgrimages for centuries; the magnificent synagogue of Tykocin, long a spiritual and intellectual center of Polish Judaism, and the “Pogranicze” [Borderlands] Foundation in Sejny, which is working to develop and teach methods of interethnic cooperation in Eastern Europe and around the world. Throughout the trip we met with cultural, intellectual, and political figures from many backgrounds and perspectives, and the students came away with an appreciation of the complexity, the heterogeneity, and the subtle beauties of Poland’s many cultures.

On April 2, the members of the University of Michigan Polish studies community joined the world in mourning the passing of one of the towering figures of the 20th century: Pope John Paul II. To mark this sad moment we quickly organized a public forum to discuss the Pope’s legacy, drawing a large crowd and the attention of the southeast Michigan media. Joining me at this forum were **Gabriele Boccaccini** (Near

## FROM THE DIRECTOR



▶ From top: The crowded Rackham Amphitheatre. Middle, left to right: Adam Zagajewski and U-M professor Bogdana Carpenter. Below: Zagajewski greets an admirer.



Eastern Studies), **Anna Grzymała-Busse** (Political Science), **Michael D. Kennedy** (Sociology), **Father Tom McClain, SJ**, (the Pastor of St. Mary’s Student Parish), and **Geneviève Zubrzycki** (Sociology).

A more joyous moment came on February 17, when **Adam Zagajewski**, one of Poland’s most innovative and eloquent poets presented the Copernicus Lecture. He joined Professor **Linda Gregerson** (English) in a literary discussion and gave a memorable reading of his work (in Polish and in English translation) to a standing-room-only audience at the Rackham Amphitheatre on February 18. Hearing him read his poems in person brought their imagery and beauty alive, and gave us all a renewed appreciation for this master of the Polish language.

Next year we at the Copernicus Endowment will continue to study Poland’s culture, history, politics, and society, and organize events that spread public awareness and understanding of the country that we all hold so dear. Highlighting the 2005–2006 academic year will be a visit by the artist **Zbigniew Libera** and the first ever retrospective of his groundbreaking work. In September and October, our distinguished faculty will be helping Americans understand the implications of the upcoming Polish parliamentary and presidential elections and what is certain to be a fundamental shift in Polish politics. The Copernicus Endowment will continue to support students interested in Polish studies, and to offer classes related to Poland in the Departments of History, Political Science, Sociology, Slavic Languages and Literatures, and more. All ongoing efforts in Polish studies depend on your generous donations, particularly at a time when so many other funding sources for higher education are being cut. On behalf of all my colleagues, I thank you in advance for your kind support.

BRIAN PORTER  
Program Director



“Try to praise the  
mutilated world.  
Remember June’s  
long days, and  
wild strawberries,  
drops of wine,  
the dew.”

— Adam Zagajewski

## The Annual Copernicus Lectures

Since 1980, the University of Michigan has hosted prominent political, cultural, and academic figures from Poland as part of the Annual Copernicus Lecture series. Prominent presenters in this series include Leszek Kołakowski, Czesław Miłosz, Stanisław Barańczak, Timothy Garton-Ash, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Górecki, Krzysztof Zanussi, Ryszard Kapuściński, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Kora Jackowska, and many more. A complete list is available on the web.

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