Programme on Modern Poland at Oxford University

On 24 October 2012 in Warsaw, an understanding was signed inaugurating the Programme on Modern Poland at Oxford University. The Programme will be the first of its kind implemented abroad – an interdisciplinary study programme of this scale devoted to Poland and its post-1989 transformation. The Oxford Programme is a response to the challenge of building Poland’s strong position in international relations. It is to become a forge for the ambassadors and friends of modern Poland, a place where students of this most prestigious European university, the future leaders and decision-makers of the entire world, will learn about Poland’s regional leadership and dynamic economy. The Programme will operate within St Antony’s College. Program founders from Oxford include acclaimed academics, including Prof Timothy Garton Ash and Prof Norman Davies, while on the Polish side, they include Dr Leszek Czarnecki, one of the wealthiest Poles who, along with his Noble Bank, donated the funds to establish the Programme. Former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Prof Zbigniew Pelczynski are Honorary Programme Patrons.

Idea of the Programme – why it is important for Poland

The Programme on Modern Poland at Oxford University is a breakthrough in terms of building Poland’s position on the international arena. Currently, a country’s image is largely responsible for its international position – its economic or political success. The Programme on Modern Poland at Oxford University is a response to this challenge. It is the future forge of ambassadors of modern Poland, a place where the future leaders and decision-makers of the entire world, specialists in areas of economics or international relations, will be able to learn about Poland and, most importantly, build relationships with the country. They will learn about Poland as a dynamic regional leader, rather than merely about its difficult history as has been hitherto the case.

“Today, Poland finds itself at an exceptional moment. We can be proud of how much we have achieved. We are a strong player in Europe, we have a dynamically growing economy, and we have handled the crisis better than others. We have caught up to the pack and have the potential and energy to reach higher. This is precisely the Poland that is worth showing off to the world. I believe that private capital has a serious obligation toward Poland, where, as a result of the transformation, we have had an opportunity to build our businesses. That is why I am honoured today to be able, along with Poland’s biggest authorities and great friends Poland at Oxford, to inaugurate this exceptional project.”

DR LESZEK CZARNECKI
FOUNDER AND OWNER OF NOBLE BANK, WHICH FUNDED ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

Esteemed representatives of academia and great authorities of Poland’s 20 years of freedom have been involved in establishing the Programme; they include Prof Timothy Garton Ash, Prof Norman Davies and Prof Margaret MacMillan, Warden of St Antony’s College. Former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a symbolic figure for the success of Poland’s transformation, and Prof Zbigniew Pelczynski, an acclaimed Polish professor at Oxford who has for many years supported Poles studying at the university, have assumed Honorary Patronage of the Programme.

Oxford University has been interested in Poland for decades. Currently, our guests and students from around the world want to know even more about Poland. The Programme on Modern Poland provides them an opportunity to attain a new level of quality in studying the country that is with increasing frequency perceived as a power within the European Union in political, economic, dynamic development, and foreign-policy terms. The Programme is an opportunity to create a new familiarity about Poland among elites and intelligentsia in Europe and around the world.

PROF TIMOTHY GARTON ASH
The Programme on Modern Poland is:

- The first ever, comprehensive study program of this scale about modern Poland conducted outside the country – the Programme is to become the most important academic centre specializing in Polish issues.
- A curriculum with focus on modern Poland, i.e. changes occurring in the 1980s, the success and assumptions of the transformation post-1989, as well as today's economic, social and political system. For the first time, Poland will be shown mainly through the prism of its success of 20 years of freedom, as a strong regional leader and an important economic and political partner, rather than merely through its trying prior history.
- Interdisciplinary Studies not Polish Studies! – The Programme is based on social sciences and humanities that cover the political, economic, sociological, historic, cultural aspects along with analysis of regional relationships. At the conceptual level, the Programme was consulted with, inter alia, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute.

St Antony's College, where the Programme on Modern Poland will be established, is the leading masters and doctoral thesis centre at the University of Oxford specializing in international relations. Its faculty includes leading academics such as Prof Timothy Garton Ash, Prof Jan Zielonka and Prof Norman Davies. St Antony's College is currently considered among the best of esteemed institutions on the international arena for its extensive expertise in Polish studies. As a result of a significant donation, it will be able to leverage that expertise to an even higher level.

Programme activities – how it will impact its environment

First of all, the Programme should not be considered in terms of a traditional study program or in the narrow understanding of that term. It is far more than a “major” or lecture series addressed to a narrow group of students. It is a research centre of a profile approaching that of a think tank. The Programme on Modern Poland is to become the world's leading academic and information centre about modern Poland and its development. Its greatest strength will be its impact, one that far exceeds the walls of a single college as the Programme is to influence the way of teaching, thinking and discussing Poland throughout Oxford, other universities and, ultimately, at intellectual and political centres throughout the world.

A Programme Director will be selected in a worldwide competition from among international professors. The program will operate according to the following tenets:

- **Academic events** – annual: 1. 8-week seminar and workshop series; 2. Conferences; 3. Lectures by world class experts. Projects will be addressed to students of St Antony's College and Oxford as well as to visiting opinion leaders and experts.
- **Publications** – numerous publications concerning conferences, articles and memoranda devoted to modern Poland will constitute a new quality and database for Programme content. Collection and promotion of academic material that presents Poland as a regional leader and frontrunner of a successful transformation will change the manner of teaching about Poland at Oxford and, ultimately, at other universities. Currently, the shortage of such materials constitutes a serious barrier to such goals.
- **Contact with other academic centres and influence over available content about Poland**
  - Raising the importance of Polish Studies in the academic world. Defining the Programme as key in Great Britain, and ultimately around the world.
  - Cooperation with other social sciences and humanities at Oxford. Some majors already have departments related to Poland and Central Europe the curricula of which the Studies Director will be able to significantly expand by introducing a new, specialized course about modern Poland.
  - Expansion of activities overseeing masters and doctoral theses related to Polish issues. Over time, these activities will enable changing the profile of Polish Studies at Oxford and beyond.
In the future, through additional funds that St Antony’s College Oxford Noble Foundation aims to acquire, expansion of the Programme’s reach is planned, which will result in the even more effective promotion of Poland and its modern successes. Additional funding may be primarily used to:

- **expand scholarship programs** – for international experts involved in building Programme curricula as well as for Polish scientists, doctoral students and students to be able to study at Oxford

- **Faster development of international cooperation** – so that not only Oxford students, but the students of other prestigious universities around the world can take advantage of the achievements of the Programme on Modern Poland.

Project financing and the Foundation – private capital serving Poland

Dr Leszek Czarnecki, as well as Noble Bank, within which the St Anthony’s College Oxford Noble Foundation has been established, decided to finance the multiyear Program on Modern Poland at Oxford University. As part of the understanding between the Founder and St Antony’s College, the Foundation will provide to the University a seed grant of about 6 million zloty. It is an amount that will assure possibilities for program development, appointment of a director, organization of numerous academic events, publications, as well as the extremely important ability to cooperate with numerous centres at Oxford and outside thereof.

The seed grant is the foundation upon which much broader project financing will be based to increase the pace of project development and scale. The goal of St Antony’s College Oxford Noble Foundation is to enable anyone who would like to financially support the development of the Programme on Modern Poland at Oxford.

Noble Bank is a private banking pioneer in Poland. In USA and Great Britain, one of the cultural foundations of financial elites is sharing wealth with others and acting for the public good. This trend is also developing in Poland. The wealthiest Poles have already attained so much that they are looking toward the future to build something for others. That is why we decided to establish the Foundation within the Bank, which will offer our partners an opportunity to become involved in this exceptional Programme. Private capital plays a key role in projects such as this. We are convinced that many Noble Bank clients will decide to devote a portion of their capital to building Poland’s position abroad. Our goal is to double the seed grant amount. I hope that together we will build an initiative that will last many decades.

MACIEJ SZCZECHURA
CHAIRMAN OF THE ST ANTONY’S COLLEGE OXFORD NOBLE FOUNDATION

The Foundation’s main governance bodies are the Foundation Board and Foundation Council. Dr Leszek Czarnecki is Chairman of the Foundation Council, which has the following members: Amb Jerzy Kotmiński, Prof Witold Orłowski, and Krzysztof Rosiński. Maciej Szczechura is the Foundation’s Chairman of the Board.