

A lesser writer might have been daunted by the extent and complexities of surveying the histories in countries such as Indonesia before, after, and primarily during 1945. Buruma usually meets this challenge with telling details, lively character sketches, and his capacity for the ironic *aperçu sommaire*. Occasionally, however, his tone fails completely, as in the following statement about the results of a settlement by Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union: “The agreement, following decisions already made by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin two years earlier at a conference in Teheran about shifting a large slice of Poland to the Soviet Union, was in keeping with an atmosphere of peculiar bonhomie” (154). Might the agreement atmosphere be more appropriately described as taking place in another way? Surely the decision to abandon a large area of Second World War ally Poland and its citizens to the genocidal tyrant Stalin must have taken place in an atmosphere of callous obliviousness.

Buruma also errs in his unfortunate references to the wartime service of Günter Grass. When Grass revealed in 2006 that he had served in uniform in Germany during the war, his revelation in *Peeling the Onion (Beim Häuten der Zwiebel)* was greeted with a storm of controversy in Germany and beyond. Buruma does not clarify that Grass was in his teens when he was forced into service in Hitler’s Waffen SS near the end of the war, a time when Germany was drafting and sending boys and young men to the front.

Although *Year Zero* is an informative history in many ways, it is not a traditional scholarly work. It does not contain a bibliography associated with the almost 400 endnotes. These notes present article and book titles in French and German, which may be accessible to some readers; unfortunately, Japanese endnote titles are not translated into English, but are anglicized, leaving the reader puzzled by all of the Japanese titles, such as Morita Yoshio’s *Chosen Shusen no kiroku: beiso ryōgun no shinchū Nihonjin no hikiage*. With these minor cavils aside, Buruma’s book is an accessible introduction to the period between the end of the Second World War and the postwar economic

boom that followed. I plan to lend the book to my father. When he and his brothers removed their Royal Canadian Air Force and Army uniforms and returned to civilian life at the end of the war, they may have missed some of the history of 1945 as it unfolded overseas.

A history of 1945 is a history that continues to extend its long reach through more than half a century. Just before the turn of this century I was a member of a Canadian delegation that met with a delegation of government officials from Indonesia. One of the Indonesian officials smiled as he reached out to shake my hand. I smiled in response, and said, “My name is James Reid.” As I clasped his outstretched hand in mine, he smiled broadly and his eyes brightened as he said with great pride “My name is Hitler.”

Kaleidoscope of Poland A Cultural Encyclopedia

By Oscar E. Swan with Ewa Kolaczek-Fila.
Foreword by Adam Zamoyski. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. xxvii + 366 pages. English and Polish indexes. ISBN 13-978-0-8229-4438-6. Hardcover. \$39.95.

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Published as part of the University of Pittsburgh Series in Russian and East European History, *Kaleidoscope of Poland’s* editor states that the book should be “of particular interest to tourists and foreign residents in Poland who want to acquire a broader context for the many unfamiliar cultural terms they will encounter while in the country.” This self-imposed audience seems rather small for a volume that ought to resonate with a broader spectrum of the general public. While most of the genre of reference works focus on political events, here the emphasis is on material culture rather than history or politics. The editor’s somewhat pedantic knowledge of the subject matter is evidenced by the inclusion of such obscure topics as the ritual first haircuts (unknown to most Poles) or a bat sanctuary (*ditto*). It is

unfortunate that there is no explanation of the inclusion criteria. There appears to be a preference for contemporary individuals and topics. *Wigilia* is included as an entry, but not *święconka*. *Oczepiny* is included, but neither *stypa* nor *gwiazdka*.

Kaleidoscope of Poland is an illustrated volume with images on glossy paper. As a volume aspiring to serious presentation of things Polish, it has considerable drawbacks. Entries suffer from the editor's self-imposed limit of about 150 words which precludes adequacy concerning such events as the Second World War or such figures as Tadeusz Kościuszko. The latter entry makes no mention of Kościuszko's exceptional service at the Battle of Saratoga in the American Revolution, his participation in the Polish-Russian War of 1792, or his famous attempt to free and educate the slaves. Although the book contains a colorized cross-reference system, none of the entries are accompanied by any reference nor is there a bibliography, yet the editor identifies one of the book's purposes as being a reference source.

Using the volume can also be needlessly cumbersome. Although it is intended for English speakers, the entries are listed in Polish and there is a Polish index. While this poses no difficulty for such relatively well-known words as *Pilsudski*, listing "martial law" as "stan wojenny" or "the Second World War" as "druga wojna światowa" is a great way to make sure that few readers will consider the volume useful. These inexplicable choices are compounded by the use of the Polish alphabet which includes diacritical marks rather than the English for arranging the entries. Would someone not familiar with Polish know to look in a different place for an entry containing an *e* or an *ę*, an *l* or an *ł*? There is an English index in the back but no reference to it in the table of contents which reflects only the page numbers on which the different beginning letters of entries start.

Similarly incomprehensible ways of presenting material are seen in the appendices. There is a "Timeline of Polish Historical Months" (what's that?) that includes seven major risings and crises, but why it is listed by month is uncertain.

Two of these are the November and January Risings in the nineteenth century, while the other five reference anticommunist activities with the last entry being August 1980. Why not include the Mierosławski revolt? Why not the Silesian or Wielkopolska risings? The Warsaw Rising in 1944? There is likewise a "Timeline of Polish Literary Figures Cited," but it is arranged by period rather than the author's last name, so if one does not know that Gabriela Zapolska was associated with Young Poland one has to look through the entire list to find her. Why timelines were chosen as an organizing principle for these is not stated. There is also a listing of "Major Polish national and Regional Risings" (again by the Polish names) and a section listing "Important Twentieth-Century Conferences Affecting Poland."

These are serious shortcomings. However, the encyclopedia is attractively produced; the photographs are of good quality and include portraits of individuals, images of food, famous places, historical sites, and artwork. The boldfaced cross-references within the entries provide useful cross-listings of related topics. Δ

MORE BOOKS

Cienie moich czasów [The shadows of my time], by **Bronisław Wildstein**. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk (www.zysk.com.pl), 2015. 451 pages. ISBN 978-83-7785-701-4. Paper. In Polish.

It is frustrating to review books like this. They reveal and teach so much, yet they are kept away from the vast sea of potential readers by being written in a little-known language. Many English-language readers are anxious to learn what has really happened in Eastern Europe over the last half-century. So many mistakes, inaccuracies, and plain lies have circulated in academia and the media about Eastern European history that books like this are like a breath of fresh air. Yet they are also irritating because the reader knows that their content has so far been locked up.