

Duplicator Underground: The Independent Publishing Industry in Communist Poland 1976–89. Ed. Gwido Zlatkes, Paweł Sowiński, and Ann Frenkel. Bloomington: Slavica, 2016. xii, 511 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Photographs. Figures. Tables. \$34.95, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.224

The independent publishing movement played a significant role in undermining the position of the communist regime in Poland. It was initiated in 1976 when their opposition activities went beyond individual instances of resistance and gained a more formalized structure. Clandestine publishers proliferated in the 1980s, with thousands of books and periodicals printed beyond the control of the censorship office, covering all kinds of topics, from political declarations to literary works and children's literature.

In the last few years, research on the so-called “second publication circuit” (or samizdat) in Poland has progressed significantly. Numerous conferences were organized, projects developed and books published, mostly in Polish, addressed to Polish specialists in the history of the democratic opposition. *Duplicator Underground* is an exception in this regard—using the English language, it attempts to reach an international audience and present the unique phenomenon of Polish underground publishing as part of anti-communist activities in the Soviet bloc.

As announced in the subtitle, the book concentrates on the publishing “industry,” that is, on the process of producing and distributing books and periodicals. It reveals many details of the duplicating process maintained in hiding, while also describing the demanding circumstances of the socialist economy of deficit. How did the publishers get paper? What were the most common formulas for homemade ink? How did “the frame” revolutionize the printing industry? These are the exemplary questions addressed by the book. Focusing primarily on the jobs of printers and distributors, it pays much less attention to the publication content, to the authors and editors and their views. Technological aspects have more potential to attract international readers than the details of Polish political disputes and, as the authors claim, publishing methods (going beyond typing machines typical for Soviet samizdat) significantly broadened the influence of independent publications, if compared to other countries of the bloc.

Shedding light on the economic features of the publishing “industry” is another original approach presented in the book. Publishers are treated as companies, or as they were called already in the 1970s and 80s, “firms,” which competed for supplies (paper), for employees (printers), and for access to printing facilities and foreign aid (whose role could have been presented in the book in more detail). The issues of paid and volunteer jobs are discussed (in general, the authors and editors worked for free while printers were paid in order to secure professional services, especially when the job was risky and time-consuming, and required long hours of mundane, hard physical labor that was difficult to combine with a regular official job). The question of free versus paid distribution of publications is also addressed.

Last but not least, the book provides an insight into “duplicator underground” as a social movement. Thousands of people were engaged in the various stages of the production and distribution of independent publications. As a result, probably more people participated in the technical aspects of the “duplicator underground” than in developing its ideological contents. Not only did the publishing activities accompany the democratic opposition in Poland and change according to its changing nature, but they *were* the opposition themselves.

The book consists of three main parts. It starts with fourteen essays by contemporary researchers, both renowned and young scholars. They use divergent

methodologies, scopes of interest, and ways of presenting their findings. Some data appear in more than one chapter and (occasionally) some contradict one another. A reader might wish better coordination and a clearer structure for this part. The texts are well-researched, with the exception of the one dealing with the Cześćochowa region, which in fact is a personal testimony of Jarosław Kapsa rather than a scholarly work and would fit better in the third part of the book.

The second part are “the sources,” the various documents created in the period of 1976–89. Selection criteria are not provided. The detailed story of a week-long printing process of one publication by Jan Walc can be read as a thriller, while a publishing guide that introduced prospective underground printers to the technical secrets of the job must be hard to comprehend for readers rooted in twenty-first century consumer society. The last narrative part consists of oral interviews collected after the collapse of the communist regime. Its main chapter is the transcript of a talk with the leading figures of the Polish “duplicator underground.”

The structure of those two non-academic parts is also not entirely clear and repetitions are even more frequent. New testimonies do not bring too many new findings, but often refer to the same few details that have already been discussed by scholars (such as the controversies over the decision to go to duplicators instead of just using typing machines, or about the first duplicator smuggled to Lublin). First-hand experiences are interesting, and personal accounts enliven the narrative.

As a Polish historian, I have no problem understanding the Polish terms used in the book (from *bibuła* [illegal publications] to *bhp* [safety rules] and *pasta bhp* [hand-washing detergent]) or grasping the details of life in Poland under communism. I am concerned that these issues might be less obvious to international readers, however, and the clarifications provided by the authors may not suffice. Some Polish terms and phenomena are explained in footnotes or in appendices but this is done quite inconsistently. The use of English is another issue. Apparently, most texts were originally written in Polish. The translation is uneven and in some chapters Polish grammatical and vocabulary structures prevail.

The book is a good means to introduce the Polish independent publishing movement to international historiography despite the fact that it is written from the Polish point of view. The authors take it for granted that readers are familiar with the realities of Poland in the period of 1976–89 and focus on local issues. Explanatory parts are few and far between. The international context hardly exists. There are some non-Polish bibliographical references and not all the authors are Polish, but in general the *Duplicator Underground* presents the Polish perspective.

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War and Diplomacy in East and West: A Biography of Józef Retinger. By M.B.B. Biskupski. Routledge Studies in Modern History. New York: Routledge, 2017. xiv, 322 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$149.95, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.225

This is not “a biography of Józef Retinger,” but rather *the* biography. M.B.B. Biskupski’s study of the mysterious diplomat—“the Polish Talleyrand” of the first half of the twentieth century—is an impressive work of history. Nearly a third of the book is devoted to endnotes and bibliography, with sources from over twenty-five libraries and archives in eight different countries. It is a tour de force of historical research indeed.