priate heading. Such editorial omissions truly detract from an otherwise outstanding dictionary.

Despite its editorial shortcomings, George J. Lerski's *Historical Dictionary of Poland, 966-1945* nevertheless promises to become a standard reference work in English for scholars, students, and others interested in Poland's multi-faceted past. It complements another recent publication (1994) with the same title by George Sanford and Adriana Gozdecka-Sanford with its 400 entries and 100-page bibliography. Additionally, Lerski's dictionary represents an appropriate memorial to this extraordinary man and his achievements.

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Kazimierz Braun's history of recent Polish theater is a stimulating book. It offers an abundance of information from a special perspective characteristic of the period it describes. Theater emerges here as a unique cultural institution devoted to the promotion of national identity against the designs of an oppressive, hostile and ultimately foreign government. His account of theater life is informed by a view of Polish history as a heroic struggle of the entire nation against German and Russian oppressors. Theater appears as the key element in the fight since 1939 of a unified society against totalitarian systems. Theatrical art is regarded as "the service to the nation."

The author has an insider's knowledge of people and politics within the Polish theater. He was a prominent director in Wroclaw in the years from 1961 to 1984 and a widely published professor of theater at the Wroclaw School of Drama. Since he left the country in 1985, he has been teaching at the State University of New York-Buffalo. His insider's viewpoint on the Polish stage translates into a personalized account based on a romantic notion of the theater as a forum for the expression of the national ethos. Built into this image is the necessity of a persistent struggle with all forces which obstruct the theater in its role, in particular a struggle with illegitimate governmental demands and restrictions. Braun's monochromatic perspective—founded on the belief that an entire nation uniformly opposed the ruling power—is in itself an illustration of the era presented in the book. This view is a legacy of the prewar conservative nationalist intelligentsia and a consequence of the persistent and excessive politicization of life in the country. Indeed, it was this ideological framework and the judgmental treatment of theater personalities that provoked some controversy when the Polish version of the book, *Teatr polszczy (1939-1989). Obszary wolności—obszary zrewolucjono* appeared in 1994 (see Rafal Węgrzyniak, "Historia zniewolonego teatru," *Dialog* 2 [1996], 141-46).

Since theater appears here as the purest expression of national identity, the modern period is introduced with a short sketch of Polish history from the acceptance of Christianity on the Polish territory in 966. This history and, correspondingly, the account of Polish theater are viewed as a history of political martyrdom, or in its milder
stages a history of an active struggle with the prevailing forces oppressing the nation. Polish theater, in Braun's view, “concerned itself with probing philosophical issues, shaping morality, participating in politics, nurturing ideas of 'service' and 'mission,' searching for spiritual values, boldly experimenting in all domains of theater creation, and achieving an extremely high artistic level in many productions.” (p. 9) The period from 1939 to 1989 is treated in one block as the time of captivity during which the most noble forces in the theater undertake the task of preserving the national identity, often through reenacting Romantic dramas.

Braun's account is oriented more toward people than toward the ideas which informed the post-1939 theater. Actors and directors are measured against an unwavering moral criterion, that of an obligatory opposition to the political establishment. Onetime members of the Communist Party and those who are perceived as aligning themselves with the regime receive lowest marks. Those who promoted the myth of the nation as expressed in Polish Romantic dramas and/or actively expressed opposition to the political status quo are closest to Braun's notion of the theater's mission. A somewhat disturbing aspect of this book is the presentation of individual theater personalities. Braun divides the leading figures into groups according to their importance and to the nature of their relation with the establishment. Images are cast in stone and little allowance is given to the complexities and real dilemmas of art existing under state sponsorship. Personalities are presented, evaluated and usually found wanting in terms of an absolute morality defined as abstinence from any interaction with the regime. Predictably, Braun's favorite director is Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, whose objective was "to share spiritual, aesthetic, patriotic, and literary values with the public, to teach and to moralize . . . to reveal [the theater's] sacred sources and to convey to the audience its spiritual powers." (p. 144). Although Kotlarczyk's stature by common consensus does not match that of Erwin Axer or Jerzy Jarocki, his Teatr Rapsodyczny, devoted to the cultivation of the Romantic heritage of Polish culture, appears here as the example of national theater. Among the actors, only Gustaw Holoubek, Halina Mikolańska, and Tadeusz Lomnicki, who combined artistic and political engagement, receive the prominence of an independent entry. We also obtain some information about avant-garde currents within the Polish theater—one Kantor more than on Grotowski—but the major accent is on great performances of traditional Polish dramatic texts. Among the personalities absent from this history of Polish theater is Adam Tarn, who founded the journal Dialog in 1956, led the way to the liberal, pro-Western experimentation theater, and brought about the broadening of the Polish theatrical repertoire. After twelve years of heading Dialog, Tarn was removed from his post and forced to leave Poland in 1968. Displaced and ignored, he prematurely died abroad, personifying a career which certainly could figure in Braun's list of theater personalities victimized by the political system.

The most interesting section within the book, "The Totalitarian Control over Theater," describes administrative systems operating within the institution. The author, however, does not differentiate between periods. Rather, he claims that "with some alterations" the controls introduced in the forties continued to function in the eighties. It seems, however, that those alterations enabled the Polish theater to maintain its vitality. We do find out, albeit marginally, about the Faustian pact, which was at the core of