

***Zmiany klimatyczne. Nauka Ekstra, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej (Climate Changes. Extra Science, The Library of Gazeta Wyborcza), volume 11, Agora, Warszawa, 2011, 143 pp., photographs, illustrations***

***Sily natury. Nauka Ekstra, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej (The Forces of Nature, Extra Science, The Library of Gazeta Wyborcza), volume 12, Agora, Warszawa, 2011, 143 pp., photographs, illustrations***

*Agora* published a twenty-volume series of popular science books of a very wide subject range – *The Infinite Universe* (1) *The Inception of the Earth* (2) *Cloning and stem cells* (9), *Materials and technologies* (14) *Computational Language* (18) *Information society* (19) and *Modern communication* (20). We are encouraged to reach for the volumes from this series by a text on the cover saying “Recommended by Professor Aleksander Wolszczan” and a photograph of the recommender. The endorsed series also contains two volumes whose subject matter is of interest for the readers of *Przegląd Geograficzny* – these are *Climate Changes* and *The Forces of Nature*, as given in the headline.

Let us reach for these books then. It turns out that the series is a Polish version of a Spanish publication. The books are works of an encyclopaedic type, but maybe it would be more appropriate to say that they are a loose collection of notes on a bit of everything (especially in volume 11), embellished with some biographical entries, effective drawings

(maps, diagrams) and interesting, often beautiful photographs.

The content of each of the volumes is contained in six chapters. In the volume about climatic changes (11) these are 1. *The climate*, 2. *Long-term natural climate changes*, 3. *The Earth and the temperature*, 4. *The consequences of climate changes*, 5. *Pollutions* and 6. *Moderating climate changes*. At the end of the volume there is a note *See you at Copernicus Science Centre*, as well as an index and a bibliography.

The content of each chapter is made of a dozen or so notes and the so-called *Graphics* – full-page charts, *Clos-ups* – discussions of chosen particular issues (e.g. the World Meteorological Organization, the North Atlantic Oscillation or the IPCC) and *Profiles* (here, among others, of W. Koppen and M. Milanković). The subject range is therefore wide and those who are interested in it, can find very much information here, unfortunately of a rather fragmentary character. Of course the presented knowledge about climate changes expresses the official stand of the IPCC, indisputably ascribing the modern climate changes to human activity.

The translation clearly shows the lack of knowledge of the specific character of the text translated, which unfortunately was not helped by the consultants (Marek Degórski and Mirosław Miętus). And so, e.g. in the text called *Aristotle and climatology* we can find phrases like “the average value of various meteorological phenomena” and “systematic study of the average values of various atmospheric states” (p. 18), which present the freshest

concepts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If this is repeated after the original text, then it should be at least commented upon in a footnote! In *Close-ups* entitled *Climate zones* (p. 29) the term “tropical climate” is used to denote equatorial climate, although it is known that the word *tropical* derives from the Latin *tropicus*, i.e. *tropic* and that in the Polish nomenclature of climate zones Polish terms (according to which “tropical climate” does not mean the climate between the tropics, but along each of them) have been used for a long time, so in Polish no one calls equatorial climate tropical. Actually, there are more translational slips, like the fact that the word for *long-range* is used for climate changes (e.g. pp. 7, 32, 37), while they should be described as long-term, and *long-range* is a word to describe weather forecasts. Stating that Milanković “...connected the movement of the Earth with climate changes” (p. 37) is mistaking the result with the cause. The phrase “the terrain of the Pacific” is a symptom of deep ignorance. However, where the text relates to more general issues, the translation is done in a good, flowing language – and such general descriptions form the majority of the text, especially in the second part of the volume. There are presented issues concerning the present times and we can find here many interesting discussions, such as *Pollutions and social inequalities*, *Prevention and removing pollutions* or *What can be done on an every-day basis?*

Volume 12 also contains six chapters: 1. *The Human and the Earth*, 2. *The forces of nature and mass extinction events* 3. *Tropical Cyclones and*

*Tornadoes*, 4. *Earthquakes and Tsunamis*, 5. *Volcanoes*, 6. *The Mighty Nature* and – just like volume 11 – a note *See you at Copernicus Science Centre*, as well as an index of names and a bibliography. The editorial approach is the same as in the previous volume (*Graphics, Close-ups*), but only one scientist (Malthus) was discussed under the title *Profiles*. The arrangement of discussing individual issues within the chapter is more orderly, there are logical passages from one matter to another.

The main topic here are natural disasters. Not only there are discussed the causes of dangerous natural phenomena (meteorite falls, glaciations and others that are the titles of chapters), but also the phenomena (e.g. types of volcanoes and eruptions) are described in more detail. The issues are illustrated with some interesting boards, such as *Where Earthquakes are created* (p. 80) or *The Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (pp. 96–97). Also here a lot of attention is paid to the problems of the modern world (*The Human threats his own existence, ecological education*).

The translation of the text is good, although it is a pity that the translator did not think that the term *extratropical* (pp. 69, 72) can be rendered in Polish quite simply, without using words of foreign origin.

In both volumes there is a bibliography – unfortunately, of no use at all for the Polish reader, since it contains entries almost only in Spanish; even American entries (such as those by Al Gore or William Burroughs) are given in the Spanish version. It is a pity that the

editors did not bother to put them in the original version or to add any publications in Polish to the list.

To summarize, it must be said that *Science Extra* has probably a chance to contribute to popularizing knowledge, also

in geophysics, but this is the knowledge at a general level rather than scientific. It may turn out, however, that for some readers this may be a good introduction to rouse interest and keenness to deepen the knowledge.

*Urszula Kossowska-Cezak  
Department of Climatology  
Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies  
University of Warsaw*