

THE SHADOW OF THE SWASTIKA: THE RISE OF FASCISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE DANUBE BASIN, 1936–1939. By *Bela Vago*. Published for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, London. Westmead, Farnborough, Hants, England: Saxon House, D. C. Heath, 1975. viii, 431 pp. \$18.95.

By 1970 the British Foreign Office, under its thirty-year rule, had released its archives for the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. In the years before the war, Britain was the most influential of the democratic great powers in the Danube area, that is, in Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The Foreign Office material proved to be rich in reports either directly about or closely relevant to the precarious position of Jews in these countries. Professor Bela Vago, an Israeli authority on the history of the area, has used the documents to throw new light on the development of the Jewish situation in these countries under "the shadow of the swastika," within the general framework of domestic political developments, from 1936 until August 1939.

Until now, German material has provided the main external evidence on prewar political developments in this area. Professor Vago found the British material to be richer, more objective, and based on much closer contacts. His book, published for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, consists of two parts. The first is a study of the 1936–August 1939 period in the three countries showing in detail how the newly released information affects the picture of developments. In the second part, 164 of the documents are printed, in part or in full.

The work is necessarily intended for specialists. More general readers will be helped by the appendix of data on the respective prewar political parties, elections, and so forth, and by the index of persons which identifies the local politicians and Foreign Office officials whose reports provide most of the documents.

There were at least one and a half million Jews in the three countries, and they encountered different attitudes. In democratic Czechoslovakia, the Czechs tended to regard them as Germanizers because of their business and cultural language, while the Slovaks saw them as carrying the Magyar influence, and the Sudetens were virtually all Hitler supporters. After Munich, perhaps unexpectedly, the Czechs quickly turned on the Jews. (Prague is now the main center, outside Moscow, of Communist anti-Semitic innuendo.) Moderate Hungarian anti-Semitism tended to distinguish between the more assimilated Jews and the more traditional ones from the East. In any event, Hungarian Jews suffered least, until the Germans took the country over in 1944. Rumania, notoriously anti-Semitic before the war, now has the largest surviving Jewish population in the area.

Although in Eastern Europe the Jewish nation survives only in remnants, and its culture in even lesser degree, its nonetheless continuous modern history in this area, up to the present, needs to be traced. Professor Vago's book would make an important contribution to such a work. His book is also a substantial contribution to the general political history of the area and period, and is informative on British policy and attitudes within the Foreign Office.

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