

The Third Reich and Yugoslavia: An Economy of Fear, 1933–1941

By Perica Hadži-Jovančić. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. 288. Cloth \$115.00. ISBN 978-1350138056.

Markus Wien

American University in Bulgaria

Perica Hadži-Jovančić's monograph on German-Yugoslav economic relations during the Third Reich, covering the period up to the beginning of the Balkan campaign in April 1941, presents an analysis of the foreign economic policy of the Nazi regime under peacetime conditions, while paying particular attention to the war economic aspects of this policy. In addition, the author discusses Yugoslav foreign economic policy, focusing on the country's genuine economic interests.

In doing so, he follows a historiographical trend of the last fifteen years to no longer view the countries of Southeast Europe solely as passive victims of a German strategy for the economic penetration of the region. Hadži-Jovančić does not deny that there was such a strategy and that it was about making the resources of the Balkan countries available for the purposes of the German war economy, but, at the same time, he emphasizes that Yugoslavia also expected advantages from close economic relations with the Third Reich. It did not have these connections imposed on it, but actively aimed at them. One of the main reasons for this was the loss of other countries as potential commercial partners, this being a result of the collapse of free world trade during the Great Depression. A decisive step toward the intensification of the German-Yugoslav trade was the 1934 commercial treaty between the two countries, which also highlighted a fundamental difference between Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia in terms of their view on the importance of foreign economic policy within the overall context of foreign politics. According to Hadži-Jovančić, this difference consisted in the fact that Yugoslavia always strictly separated the areas of foreign politics in the "classical" sense and foreign economic politics, while, in Germany, these were regarded as two sides of the same coin.

The author argues that, in the 1930s, Yugoslavia sought trade partnership but also cooperation in other economic fields with Germany for purely economic reasons, while it continued to keep as many foreign political options as possible open, and remained, at least formally, part of the alliance system created by France in Southeast Europe. It was not until it joined the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941 that the country started following Nazi Germany's course in foreign policy too. Somewhat apodictically, the author proclaims at several points in the book that, until then, both economic and foreign economic policy had been pursued by the government of Yugoslavia in a strictly pragmatic and rational manner. In contrast, German foreign economic policy from the Nazi seizure of power onward was consistently guided by political—including military—and thus ideological interests. With regard to Southeast Europe and thus Yugoslavia, it bore strong colonialist traits, even if it did not follow a *Lebensraum* ideology in the same way as with regard to the Soviet Union.

Hadži-Jovančić places these developments in a broader historical context, starting in the first chapter with the beginnings of the German *Mittleuropa* concept going back to before World War I, which opened up new perspectives for an economically based German foreign policy after the war. Under the auspices of the idea of a Greater Economic Area, Germany initially attempted to reactivate prewar trade relations in Southeast Europe in order to open up new foreign policy options, while still burdened by the Treaty of Versailles. After

1933, though, this concept was increasingly used to bring the Danube region under German influence as a reservoir of raw materials for the war economy.

After this historical retrospective, and from the second chapter onwards, Hadži-Jovančić focuses on his actual topic, German-Yugoslav economic relations. He focuses on Austria's role within this context, pointing at a dilemma in Yugoslav foreign policy. On the one hand, Yugoslavia, being an anti-revisionist power and supporter of the Versailles peace order, advocated Austria's independence and developed good political and economic relations with the Alpine republic. On the other hand, Yugoslavia always saw Austria as a possible seedbed for a reestablishment of the Habsburg Monarchy—a danger that could be averted by a German annexation of Austria. This dilemma eventually motivated Yugoslavia to adopt a course of neutrality in foreign policy.

In Chapters 3 to 8, Hadži-Jovančić turns to German-Yugoslav economic relations in the narrower sense, placing them in the context of domestic economic developments in both countries. Chapter 3 revolves around the economic relations under the auspices of Hjalmar Schacht's New Plan and the German-Yugoslav commercial treaty of 1934, which, as a dispatch from the German Foreign Office to the German embassy in Rome clearly showed, was intended by Germany as a means of exerting political pressure on Belgrade. The first effects of this approach are explained in the fourth chapter, which discusses Yugoslavia as a pawn between the Balkan interests of Germany and Italy. In the fifth chapter, the author traces the development of German-Yugoslav economic relations under the framework of Goering's Four-Year Plan, which was already clearly structured along war economic lines. Not only did the German idea of a large Southeast European economic area play an important role in this plan, but so did the Yugoslav interest in arms deliveries from Germany, since there was no significant arms industry in the country itself.

Chapter 6 deals with the industrialization of Yugoslavia in connection with its economic relations with Germany. Here, Hadži-Jovančić notes that Germany's role was not insignificant with regard to Yugoslavia's modernization efforts in the second half of the 1930s. Above all, trade between the two countries was an important factor for both countries and for the industrialization as well as the modernization of Yugoslav agriculture, although, from the German point of view, these developments were only supposed to serve Germany's interest in keeping Yugoslavia as a supplier of raw materials and semi-finished agricultural products. For its own part, however, Yugoslavia also benefited from being supplied with German agricultural technology and, more generally, from direct government purchases in Germany as well as from growing German direct investment.

Even though Yugoslavia tried to maintain its foreign political independence despite its growing economic dependence on Germany, ideological proximity during the 1930s drew the country under the political influence of the Third Reich. Hadži-Jovančić states a "native fascism" (134) as a growing ideological trend for Yugoslavia in the 1930s, although he does not identify antisemitism as a crucial component of this form of fascism. Instead, Yugoslavia had direct contact with National Socialism primarily through the minority group of the *Volksdeutsche*. The author explores this problem in the seventh chapter.

In Chapters 8 and 9, Hadži-Jovančić discusses the increasing intertwining of economic and political relations between Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia after the beginning of World War II. Until the Western campaign in June 1940, Yugoslavia was able to maintain a certain degree of foreign political independence by leaning toward France, despite its economic dependence on the Third Reich. After that, however, Yugoslavia apparently had no choice but to follow the Nazi regime's foreign policy, which led to its accession to the Tripartite Pact in the spring of 1941. Hadži-Jovančić discusses the attempt to free Yugoslavia from this situation through a coup d'état and a corresponding policy change in Chapter 9 under the heading "Yugoslavia Commits Suicide," referring to the German invasion of Yugoslavia immediately after the coup against the government of Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković.

All in all, Perica Hadži-Jovančić has written a solid account of German-Yugoslav economic relations during the Nazi era, before the German attack in April 1941. The book rests on a broad foundation of sources, though without presenting new or unknown documents. At the same time, the book does make an important contribution. In particular, the portrayal of Yugoslavia as an actor independently pursuing its political and economic interests relativizes conventional notions of a German economic penetration of the Balkans to which the Balkan countries were passively exposed. The discussion of German economic policy in Southeast Europe, on the other hand, essentially follows the current state of research and does not offer major new insights. Nevertheless, it is indispensable for the book as a whole, since it contributes to a better understanding of Yugoslav government decisions.

Some of the author's assessments, however, could have been kept more modest. For example, the very categorical and repeatedly expressed view that Yugoslav foreign economic policy was always completely rational and pragmatic, while German foreign economic policy was strongly determined by the war economy and ideological aspects, is certainly debatable. In addition, Hadži-Jovančić's assumption that the Yugoslav government's internal economic and political decisions were directly and immediately implemented even on the lower levels of economy and society, including agriculture, also should be reconsidered, since Yugoslav society was strongly dominated by traditional village structures, where the state was mostly viewed as something distant and abstract and did not have much to do with the realities of life. Finally, for reasons of style, the author could perhaps have dispensed with the sometimes stereotypical address of the National Socialist regime as "the Germans" and their counterpart as "the Yugoslavs."

All in all, however, this is a useful and important study that can be recommended to anyone interested in the social and economic history of Southeast Europe before 1945.

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Refugees from Nazi-Occupied Europe in British Overseas Territories

Edited by Swen Steinberg and Anthony Grenville. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020. Pp. xii + 266. Paper €75.00. ISBN 978-9004399525.

Rachel Pistol

King's College London

The latest offering of *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* focuses on the theme of European refugees in British Overseas Territories. It is all too easy to focus merely on what happened to refugees from Nazi oppression in Great Britain or the Americas—Steinberg and Grenville's edited collection offers a welcome addition to the field of refugee studies by expanding the range of countries considered.

Steinberg and Grenville use their introduction to give a thorough overview of the historiography of refugee and internment history in the 1930s and 1940s. The movement of refugees is, by its very nature, transnational, hence the choice of topic for this volume. The conditions that create large numbers of refugees constantly change, limiting options available for those seeking escape. Indeed, "[m]any of the refugees fled 'country by country', at first within Europe, were often 'stopped in flight' at some point or reached a safe destination