

***Hitler and Czechoslovakia in World War II: Domination and Retaliation.*** By Patrick Crowhurst. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. x, 329 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Maps. \$150.00, hard bound, \$40.95, paper, \$36.85, e-book.  
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Czechoslovakia figures in most histories of World War II, thanks to the Munich Conference of 1938, the epitome of the British and French policy of appeasement and still an oft-cited analogy in international relations. What happened afterwards is the story Patrick Crowhurst tells in this book, an apparently unrevised reprint initially published by I. B. Tauris in 2013. In six chapters he covers the summer crisis of 1938, Munich and its aftermath, the brief existence and final destruction of the so-called Second Republic, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and its political institutions after March 1939, the Nazi authorities' forced mobilization of Czech labor for the German war economy, the exploitation of the Protectorate's resources for the war, and finally the policies of Edvard Beneš's government in exile, especially the decision to expel the Czechoslovak Germans after the war.

Crowhurst's account uses archival materials from the Czech Republic, Germany, and the United Kingdom, and indeed this may be the greatest contribution his book makes. The major outlines of his interpretation do not break particularly new ground. Adolf Hitler is well-established in the literature as a manipulator who seized opportunities as they presented themselves, and proved masterful at orchestrating the tensions of 1938 leading to the Munich Conference. That several Nazi divisions invading Poland in 1939 and France in 1940 were equipped with Czechoslovak matériel is not disputed. The role of Czech workers (as forced labor in the Reich and working in the Protectorate's industries) has also been explored in the literature. The crucial part the Protectorate's resources played in the Nazi war economy, especially after Operation Barbarossa failed to defeat the Soviet Union, is not unfamiliar. What Crowhurst provides for these general interpretations is a wealth of specific data, corroborative detail, and telling personal stories of individuals whose traces he finds in the archives.

His retelling of the international history of the crises of 1938 and 1939 uses British and German diplomatic sources, as well as secondary literature. His treatment of the destruction of the Second Republic pays significant attention to Poland and Hungary, often relegated to the role of bit players. Throughout, Crowhurst's major interest—and his strongest archival contribution—is in economic matters, especially and increasingly related to Germany's military needs. This focus emerges from the detailed tables: whereas the first three chapters have a total of four tables (two on post-Munich refugees, one on the population of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, and one providing chilling detail on hostages shot during the *Heydrichiáda* following the attack on the Reichsprotector Reinhard Heydrich on May 27, 1942), Chapter 4, dealing with forced labor, provides three, while Chapter 5, on the economic resources of the Protectorate and their exploitation, has no fewer than twenty-three. Much of these latter chapters draws from company and association archives held in multiple sites in the Czech Republic. In the final chapter Crowhurst returns to a more international history approach, dealing generally with Beneš's struggle for recognition as head of a Czechoslovak exile government, for the annulling of the Munich Agreement, and for the approval of plans to expel the Czechoslovak Germans. On this last theme, he presents valuable recent work by Czech and German scholars on this still-sensitive issue.

The impact of these contributions is lessened by other features of the text. By choosing a thematic approach, Crowhurst risked—and did not avoid—chronological confusion and some redundancy. His account is not set well into its context: Crowhurst starts with the summer of 1938, following a brief introduction that has

some questionable assertions and factual inaccuracies. More glaring than these careless mistakes is that, title notwithstanding, Slovakia disappears almost entirely from the story after March 1939. There is no treatment of the Slovak state, its institutions, and its policies (or Nazi policies towards it) similar to that of the Protectorate. The Holocaust is also not treated in a systematic way, except for a few pages in the chapter on forced labor and some scattered mentions in other sections. It seems dubious to assert that “there was no history of anti-Semitism in Czech culture” (256) and the Roma (referred to as “Gypsies”) are mentioned only once (273). Finally, Crowhurst writes of “Germans” and “Czechs” with little attempt to address the ambiguities of those terms both before and during the war. Though useful to advanced undergraduates and graduate students for its archival material, unfortunately, for this book the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

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***In the Kingdom of Shoes: Bata, Zlín, Globalization, 1894–1945.*** By Zachary Austin Doleshal. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. xv, 272 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$90.00, hard bound \$39.95, paper.

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The history, and especially lore, of the Bat’a shoe empire has long been tied up with a Czech nostalgia for “what could have been.” The success of the Bat’a Company, located in a less than cosmopolitan or lucrative corner of the Czech lands, offered opportunity to those who might otherwise have missed out, and its legacy has been a great source of pride. Václav Havel himself was the grandson of Bat’a executive Hugo Vavrečka and as president, he helped jumpstart the Tomas Bata University in Zlín.

Zachary Austin Doleshal’s *In the Kingdom of Shoes* is the first English-language history of Bat’a. Considering that its story touches on so many fascinating aspects of east central European history, it is surprising that such a book did not come sooner. Fortunately, Doleshal delivers. He does a superb job of mining the archives as well as dipping into the abundant Czech-language historiography, both the older hagiographic version and the newer revisionist one, to narrate the nuanced tale of the Bat’a company founded within an empire but soon confronting national identity politics, even as it continued to define itself by what Doleshal, borrowing from Tara Zahra’s work, refers to as a policy of “national indifference.” He argues that national indifference in this case was a carefully considered company policy, since “[n]ational belonging was not an ideal but an obstacle” (13) for Bat’a.

For those not familiar with the Bat’a Company, the story goes like this: in 1894, Antonín Bat’a, a card-playing, beer-loving shoe manufacturer, gave his three children an early inheritance with which to start their own shoe factory. They moved to Zlín, where they set up shop, hiring local shoemakers working out of their homes. Women stitched the uppers; men worked on the lathe (a gender division that would remain in place). Tomáš Bat’a, who would largely lead the enterprise, hit it big with the so-called *batovky*—affordable cotton loafers. Their popularity took off, orders poured in from Vienna, and Tomáš had to find a way to mass produce them. With several employees, he took a work trip to Lynn, Massachusetts, America’s center of shoe manufacturing, where he turned a blind eye to the ongoing labor strikes, and focused instead on the machinery. (Not exactly the life of the party, when he found his employees drunk and gambling, he left them behind in America.)