

**STEVEN VAJDA - OBITUARY.**

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Steven Vajda, Professor of Operational Research at Birmingham University, 1965-68, and subsequently senior research fellow at Sussex University, died on December 10 aged 94. He was born in Budapest on August 20, 1901.

STEVEN VAJDA played a major part in the development of postwar operational research in Britain and mathematical programming in particular. His book *The Theory of Games and Linear Programming* (1956) was the first on the subject and was translated into many languages. He was influential in communicating these and related subjects to the mathematical, scientific and operational research communities.

Steven Vajda's family moved, soon after his birth, from Budapest to Vienna, where he received his education and training as an actuary. Subsequently he went to Vienna University where he studied mathematics followed by a doctorate. At this time he studied with, and came to know, many of the century's intellectuals such as Carnap, Schlick, Popper and Godel as well as Gabor (inventor of the hologram). Their influence helped to form **Vajda**'s broad scientific, mathematical and political knowledge.

The Anschluss in 1938 disrupted **Vajda**'s family and career but his wife and children were subsequently reunited with him in England in 1939. With the outbreak of war he was interned on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien. Here he taught mathematics in what he called a "mini-university". Among his pupils were Claus Moser and Peter Landsberg.

His early release took him into employment in the insurance industry. Soon his abilities were more widely recognised and he was recruited into the Admiralty where he subsequently became head of mathematics followed by head of operational research. This was when he did some of his most valuable work. While he did not contribute greatly to the new discoveries in Linear Programming, he was one of the prime communicators of the subject, mainly by means of books and lectures. These were exciting times with mathematicians and economists such as Dantzig, Kantorivitch and von Neumann discovering the subject and its connections with Game Theory.

Vajda understood these new developments and was able to communicate them to others such as Martin Beale who went on to make major developments themselves. Linear Programming proved to have widespread practical applications, as well in other branches of mathematics such as Game Theory, Graph Theory and Combinatorics.

An underlying theme of these branches of mathematics was the concept of Duality which always fascinated **Vajda**. His breadth enabled him to see connections which unfortunately are lost to many less imaginative academics. Of particular interest to him were the military, actuarial and manpower applications, about which he wrote widely.

On leaving the Admiralty at the age of 64 in 1965 **Vajda** embarked on an academic career as the first Professor of Operational Research at Birmingham University. Again, he influenced many other academics and practitioners with his books and lectures. He "retired" again to Sussex University in 1973 first to the Operational Research Group and then the Statistics Group, where he remained active up to the end of his life.

Steven Vajda was a companion of the Operational Research Society and an honorary life member. He was also an honorary life member of the Institute of Actuaries and a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.

Vajda's wife predeceased him. He leaves a son and a daughter.

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