

**Talbot Imlay and Martin Horn**, *The Politics of Industrial Collaboration during World War II, Ford France, Vichy and Nazi Germany*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2014. 291pp., ISBN: 978-1107016361, £65.00

The Second World War in France has traditionally been characterised by historiographical debates which scholars have struggled to distance from contemporary politics. The result has been that French politics in the immediate post-war years, found itself, to some extent, in the shadow of actions in the conflict. Questions over industrial collaboration and ties with Nazi industrialists have followed many French companies even to this day and the debate over the meaning and extent of the practice has produced numerous monographs, articles and discussions. Talbot Imlay and Martin Horn have produced a monograph examining a more unusual case in French industrial history, that of Ford France. Ostensibly an American company, Ford France found itself faced with the same choices that befell other French companies in Vichy France: collaborate or stagnate?

The monograph is composed of two strands of analysis that are successfully interwoven to produce a rich study that will stimulate debate over both the position of this company and its place in the wider debate. On the surface, it can be read as a history of Ford France during the Second World War: it walked the difficult line of both portraying itself as a French company, which supported trade in France, and maintaining links with its parent in America. As Imlay and Horn show, Ford France was largely unsuccessful in this and thus agreed to collaborate with Germany, producing trucks even after the entry of the United States to the war. Ford France actually benefitted from the early years of the occupation: it received increasing order numbers from the German armed forces and government. This conclusion prompts the second, and perhaps more interesting thread of the book: industrial

collaboration and the consequences that such actions brought. Indeed, one of the principal strengths of the book is the contextualisation that the authors provide, although the potential for this exceeds the scope offered by Imai and Horn.

The topic of industrial collaboration will undoubtedly interest a wider range of readers. Ford France's fortunes during the conflict bring up stimulating debates over how successfully an American company can masquerade as a French enterprise; it also raises uncomfortable and hitherto unexplored issues over how far an American business collaborated with the Nazi regime. It is, nevertheless, by the authors' own admissions, a niche audience. Industrial collaboration, however, should not only be of interest for scholars of Second World War France, but also for those working on business history. If read as an example of the dilemma of collaboration during wartime, its appeal is perhaps even wider. The authors use the example of Ford France to explode the image of French companies forced to work for the Nazis in order to make a profit. In fact, most companies in this situation, including Ford France, had considerable room for manoeuvre. Whilst a flat refusal to collaborate with Germany in any sense was probably untenable, how far those companies chose to cooperate varied enormously and this issue remains a lightning rod for debate in contemporary French industrial discussions.

The authors are prepared to concede the principle weakness of the book: Ford France is only one example and both readers and scholars should not be quick to make facile generalisations. This study might have benefitted from further comparative analyses with other American-owned companies in France; this would have assisted evaluation of whether or not Ford France received special treatment because it provided extremely important resources which Germany required for its war effort. It is the authors' claim that Ford France

had a “unique” position, which allowed them to under-produce. In reality, there were numerous French companies that under-produced to aid the German war effort, and Ford France’s use of this tactic was not simply because of the company’s American origins. In spite of this minor failure this study provides a valuable insight into how one company continued to operate during the Nazi occupation of France and also raises important questions and issues that should be incorporated into any debate on industrial collaboration. How far this model can be applied to other companies is debatable, but it paints one corner of a growing picture into French industrial life during the *années noires*.

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