

Ford, 1903–2003: The European History. Edited by Hubert Bonin, Yannick Lung, and Steven Tolliday. Paris: PLAGÉ, 2003. Vol. 1, 611 pp.; vol. 2, 630 pp. Index, notes, illustrations, photographs, tables. Cloth, €150. ISBN: 2-914-369-9.

Reviewed by Tim Whisler

Henry Ford allegedly claimed that “history is bunk,” and yet his company has been the topic of several seminal studies in business history. The three-volume history of Ford and his enterprise—*Ford: The Times, the Man, the Company* (1954); *Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915–1933* (1957); and *Ford: Decline and Rebirth* (1963)—by Allan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill arguably established the current paradigm for business history. Most scholars regard the subsequent work, *American Business Abroad: Ford on Six Continents* (1964), by Mira Wilkins and Frank Hill as the pioneering study on the development of the multinational enterprise.

*Ford, 1903–2003: The European History* is a worthy complement to the work of Nevins and Hill and Wilkins. Edited by Hubert Bonin, Yannick Lung and Steven Tolliday, the publication appears as a two-volume set consisting of twenty-nine papers delivered at a conference in Bordeaux to mark the centennial of the Ford Motor Company (FMC). It is unlikely that this compilation will achieve the ground-breaking status of the studies by Nevins and Hill and Wilkins. Nonetheless, scholars of the FMC, the automobile industry, and industrial-organizational theory may well consult this recent arrival as often as they turn to those earlier works. The papers offer fresh insights into FMC’s European strategy and operations as well as reexaminations of the meaning of “Fordism.”

*Ford, 1903–2003: The European History* avoids the scattershot content and uncoordinated organization that occasionally plague publications of conference proceedings. The set reads more like a monograph than an anthology. Its logical structure and synchronized entries is a remarkable achievement, since it meant coordinating the contributions of twenty-eight authors from eleven European countries and the United States. Volume One examines Ford Europe within the context of broad cross-national topics. The first seven papers, which constitute Part One, survey the history of the

carmaker and of Fordism in Europe. Scholars will appreciate the account by Elizabeth Adkins, director of FMC's global information management division, of the development of the corporate archive and her analysis of the link between historical documents and current information management. Fittingly, Wilkins revisits her original conclusions from *American Business Abroad* and examines subsequent debates on the characteristics of Fordism. Noting that FMC's European subsidiaries adapted Fordism to fit national and cultural constructs, she suggests that Fordism was more flexible than has been commonly portrayed. She also argues that many discussions have ignored the system's contribution to economic growth rates and a higher standard of living for Europeans. Michel Freyssenet and Patrick Fridenson offer analytical tools and models to identify the European model of Fordism. Three papers examine Ford's European organization and strategy. Bonin offers a review and critique of Ford's response to allegations that its German and occupied subsidiaries utilized slave labor during the Second World War. He praises the company's factually thorough refutation of the claims, but faults the report for failing to analyze the subsidiary's actions and its management's decisions.

Part Two of the first volume comprises five papers on the evolution of FMC's European strategy. Walter Kaiser investigates the corporation's post-World War II research-and-development activities, which included international collaboration and the application of computer-design tools. Bernard Jullien compares and contrasts FMC's European and U.S. distribution structures. He suggests that different competitive pressures and legal environments explain their distinct characteristics. In an investigation of FMC marketing techniques, Bonin argues that the quintessential American multinational created indigenous brand images in European national markets through advertising and sponsorship of motor sports. Lung contends that FMC departed from its traditional policy of internal growth in the 1990s when it "purchased" a luxury-brand image by acquiring European upscale manufacturers, Jaguar, Land Rover, Aston Martin, and Volvo. Thomas Fetzler compares FMC's labor-relations policies in its British and German plants.

Volume Two focuses on FMC's history of manufacturing and retailing in European national markets. This volume is divided into three parts (numbered consecutively from the first volume), representing the northwestern, southwestern and

eastern European regions. This geographic breakdown largely coincides with the three distinct strategic phases that characterized Ford Europe.

Northwestern Europe (Part Three), particularly Britain, was the hub of FMC's multi-domestic strategy from 1904 until the late 1960s. In three insightful papers on the rise and subsequent fall of the company's British operations and on FMC's 1967 European integration plan, Tolliday argues that a relatively favorable micro- and macroeconomic environment explains why Britain accounted for FMC's largest European output and market share until the 1970s. He claims that deteriorating industrial relations, unfavorable currency exchange rates, and the country's delayed entry into the European Community (EC) left Britain diminished role in the corporation's 1967 European strategy. As British output gradually declined and then ceased in 2002, FMC shifted its production center to the more productive and integrated German and Belgian plants, according to Paul Thomes and Thierry Grosbois, in their respective papers. The final papers in Part Three—by Ferry De Goey and Peter Sorensen et al.—examine the marginalization of long-running Dutch and Scandinavian production plants.

FMC's move into southwestern Europe (Part Four) between 1970 and 2000 completed the transition from a multidomestic to a transnational division-of-labor strategy. Papers by Jean-Louis Loubet and Nicolas Hatzfeld and by Salvador Estape-Triay illustrate how political upheavals and protectionism caused FMC to retreat from Spain and France in the 1950s after decades of operating in these two countries. Bonin, Lung, and Clarisse Cazals suggest in separate papers that FMC cautiously reentered the French market in the 1990s, establishing component factories that supply European assembly plants, which, in turn, export cars to France. FMC gained share in the traditionally chauvinistic market by highlighting the local content in marketing campaigns and rejuvenating surviving members of the original retail network, such as the Palau dealership. Bonin probes the largely neglected history of car dealers in his examination of this retailer. As Enrique de Miguel Fernandez's paper indicates, FMC's return to Spain has been far less subtle. Only FMC's German operations have a higher annual output than the Valencia complex, which has taken on much of the production formerly carried out in Britain. Valencia produces the new minicar model that is at the forefront of FMC's recent push into the Italian market. According to Giuseppe Volpato,

imports have gained market share over the past two decades as Fiat's tremendous political clout has waned.

Part Five examines FMC's complex history in eastern Europe. FMC's new production facilities in Turkey and post-Communist Russia during the 1990s were threads of the "Ford 2000 strategy" to achieve economies of scale in development, production, and distribution through global integration of operations. The papers of Boris Shpotov, Yves Cohen, and Jean-Jacques Chanaron reveal how FMC entered the tsarist market, survived the Bolshevik revolution, and captured Stalin's attention before eventually leaving Russia. Cohen provides a fascinating case study of the disastrous Soviet attempt in the 1930s to produce a replica of the Fordson truck using a wildly imperfect imitation of Fordism. Leila Duruiz contends that access to EC membership has transformed the once peripheral Turkish market into a potentially low-cost production base for FMC exports.

*Ford, 1903–2003: The European History* represents a remarkable achievement in scholarship and, like FMC itself, in multinational collaboration. The contributors have uncovered archival material, including numerous photographs, and they have reinterpreted the story of FMC in Europe. The bibliography and chronology are so extensive that they form the sixth and final part of Volume Two. The set suffers from minor teething problems, however. The relatively large number of typographic errors and the widely varied narrative styles may distract some readers. The editors acknowledge that the absence of a comprehensive examination of German operations and the inclusion of only one discussion of industrial relations leave gaping holes in the set. Additionally, a study of the role of Ford Europe from Dearborn's perspective, particularly as it affected FMC's North American operations and fortunes, would have rounded out the multinational corporate context. Hardly "bunk," this set will be as durable and notable as the Model T.

*Tim Whisler is professor of history at Saint Francis University. His publications include The British Motor Industry, 1945–94: A Case Study in Industrial Decline (2000).*