

Leviathans: Multinational Corporations and the New Global History. Edited by Alfred D. Chandler Jr. and Bruce Mazlish. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xiii + 249 pp. Tables, notes, index. Cloth, \$65.00; paper, \$22.95. ISBN: cloth, 0-521-84061-9; paper, 0-521-54993-0.

Reviewed by Leslie Hannah

The “New Global History” of the subtitle of *Leviathans* is an interdisciplinary collaboration of multiple contributors, drawing on an eclectic range of historical and social sciences and sensitive to political, environmental, social and cultural, as well as to business and economic issues. A brave prospectus that provokes a range of interesting questions. Yet the volume fails to make the intellectual investment required to deliver the answers. Far from showing a productive meeting of minds, it forces the unwilling reader to witness a spectacular midair collision of mutual incomprehension.

The good news is that the disaster has survivors. The summaries of multinational development (by Mira Wilkins on the period from the nineteenth century to 1930 and by Geoffrey Jones on the 1930s to the 1980s) are successful in delivering on their promises, but they also add the spice of something more thoughtful and challenging. For example, both flag the possibility that, in 1930, the intracompany trade of multinationals (as a share of all world trade) may have exceeded the share of such transactions at the end of the twentieth century (pp. 66, 88–89). Yet on reading, in the same volume, that “the capitalization of U.S. stock markets has always been significantly greater than that of any other nation” (p. 205)—and that is only *one* of the volume’s obvious howlers—one has a gauge of the degree of intellectual engagement with historical issues by some of the other contributors.

The pervading tone of the later essays, which attempt to address the wider issues of poverty, the environment, and inequality, is a little too pious to confront the complexity expressed in the wry *graffito*: “Yankee go home; but please take me with you.” (We are told that José Bové trashed McDonalds, but not that his compatriots, sated by decades of the best restaurant food in Europe, and yearning for variety, have made that company’s French subsidiary one of its most profitable.) Many of the comments fail to address directly the 25 percent of global output that is controlled by multinationals, but meander freely over the 75 percent that is not so controlled. (Executive pay may be scandalously awry, but the problem appears to be concentrated in countries with particular types of institutions and is not unique to multinationals. When European farmers riot in Brussels, they are surely lining up for their governments’ distribution of pork,

impoverishing small farmers in Africa in the process, rather than undermining multinationals.) Nonetheless some contributions shine on their own merits. Sei Yonekura and Sara McKinney, in their analysis of innovative Japanese multinationals, show that good history can be combined with good social science. Bruce Mazlish and Elliott Morss analyze the characteristics of the “global elite” invited to Davos in 2000. Robert Monks provides an independent-minded discussion of corporate governance, showing a refreshingly concrete grasp of what might—and what might not—follow from the view that shareholders have obligations as well as rights. Stephen Kobrin makes some wise observations on the roots of antiglobalization protests.

This book will not deliver the editors’ promised gift-wrapped crown jewels, but those whose search objectives are more focused could unearth a gem.

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