

Les entreprises du secteur de l'énergie sous l'Occupation [The Energy Sector during the Occupation]. Edited by Varaschin Denis. Arras: Artois Presses Université, 2006. 447 pp. Illustrations, figures, tables, notes. Paper, €30.00. ISBN: 2-848-32045-1.

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*Les entreprises du secteur de l'énergie sous l'Occupation* is an edited collection of papers that were presented at a conference held in 2004 at the Université d'Arras. This conference was dedicated to the history of the energy sector in occupied countries during the Second World War. The title of the book is somewhat misleading, since it suggests equal coverage of all forms of energy in all the occupied countries. However, most of the papers are about the electricity sector, and the collection is heavily weighted toward the French experience (eighteen papers out of twenty-two essays are about France). Although other countries are mentioned, only Belgium (Dirk Luyten, "Le secteur de l'énergie en Belgique dans la seconde guerre mondiale: un secteur 'privilégié'?"); Germany (Bernhard Stier, "Expansion, réforme de structure et interconnexion européenne: Développement et difficultés de l'électricité sous le nazisme, 1939–1945"); Switzerland (Serge Paquier, "Le cas d'un petit pays neutré: La Suisse"); and the United Kingdom (Martin Chick, "Sécurité nationale, conflit et ravitaillement en carburant et énergie électrique dans la Grande Bretagne en guerre") are analyzed in depth; of these four, only Belgium was occupied.

This caveat aside, many of the papers offer new and interesting data and insights. The history of French business during the Second World War has become a subject of renewed interest in the last fifteen years. However, despite the importance of energy production to the war effort, few monographs have analyzed either the evolution of the sector as a whole or the experience of specific companies during the occupation. Thus, in beginning to open new avenues of research on this topic, this book has started to fill a gap in the literature.

Every company in occupied France faced a series of common issues following the German invasion: What position should the company adopt toward the enemy? How could it protect its industrial equipment (in order to remain productive after the war)?

How would the company remain profitable? To what extent should the company focus on productivity and how would it be affected by the war? These issues were especially pressing for the energy sector, because its military value made it vulnerable to exploitation by the Germans and an obvious target for Allied retaliation. The essays explore these questions, sometimes at the microlevel (by firm, branch, or production facility) and sometimes, particularly in the essays on conditions outside France, at the macrolevel.

Not surprisingly, in view of the capital-intensive nature of the energy sector, most of the papers deal with the firms' investments in tools, finance, and productivity. Several case studies (for example, Pierre Lanthier, "Vichy et l'Occupation dans le moyen terme: Investissements et structures organisationnelles des équipements électriques de 1930 à 1955," and Catherine Vuillermot, "Le groupe Durand sous l'Occupation") show how CEOs attempted to raise needed funds, and one chapter describes how the Paris bourse aided them in doing so (André Straus, "Le financement des entreprises de production d'électricité pendant la seconde guerre mondiale"). The means devised by both large and small entities to finance the replacement of machines during the war are analyzed in depth. The essay dedicated to Neyrlet-Beylier Picard-Pictet (Anne Dalmasso, "Opportunités et contraintes de l'économe de guerre: Neyrlet-Beylier Picard-Pictet, 1935–1945") and the profitability of this firm suggests that the war offered commercial opportunities to some companies. In most cases, however, the war had a negative impact on the firms. Initially, they managed to maintain productivity at prewar levels, but their production gradually collapsed after 1942. The draft, which siphoned off workers for the war effort, had implications for managements, and the Vichy regime's centralized approach had an impact on how energy companies were run. However, in the end, the war did not force a radical change in the industry's direction, and most CEOs remained in charge of their companies after Germany's defeat. In practice, the management adopted a pragmatic approach to the occupation.

In their methodology, the researchers have drawn extensively from local, national, and international archives. Most of the papers present new series of data and revised estimates of capital investments, stock prices, production, energy exports, and

productivity. Despite the large amount of new data assembled in these papers, econometric analyses are unfortunately sparse.

This collection represents an advance in our knowledge of the topic and a valuable contribution to business and economic history. However, the book would have benefited by a final summary of the major findings in a general conclusion. Unfortunately, there was not even an attempt to determine the extent to which the conclusions can be generalized. Nor were enough countries included in the discussion to provide a broad picture of Germany's vision for the energy sector. Notably absent was any consideration of Czechoslovakia and Norway, which were, respectively, major coal and electricity producers before the war. Also lacking is a comparison of the energy companies' strategic responses to Germany's policies of exploitation, which varied widely between countries, (see, for example, Peter Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay?* [1996]). Despite these few shortcomings, this book is likely to be of value to business and economic historians with an interest in the interplay between the energy sector and economic and management policies during the occupation.

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