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Luc-André Brunet, *Forging Europe: Industrial Organisation in France, 1940-1952*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. xii + 296 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$109.99 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-349-95197-0; \$109.99 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-349-95758-3; \$84.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-349-95198-7.

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In his classic work written nearly a half century ago, Robert Paxton argued that Vichy was less a parenthesis than a transitional moment between the late Third Republic and the Fourth and Fifth Republics that followed the Second World War.[1] That idea, elaborated in far greater depth more recently by Philip Nord,[2] forms the argument of Luc-André Brunet's study of Vichy's Organization Committees and their afterlife in the first years of the Fourth French Republic. Brunet's central point is that these committees, which he labels "the central pillars of the New Industrial Order established in the summer of 1940" (p. 26), not only did not disappear with the collapse of the Vichy state, albeit continued under new names, but also provided a structural basis for the Monnet Plan. Indeed, Brunet implies that the European Coal and Steel Community's (ECSC) origins, in certain ways illustrated through the history of the Organization Committees, cannot be fully separated from Nazi attempts to create a New European Order during the Second World War. Brunet thus presents a study in continuity in three regards: the continuity of the Organization Committees across the supposed dividing line of 1944-1945, the continuity of individuals identified with the committees and their permutations after Vichy, and the continuity between two very different visions of European economic integration.

This is an important, if not altogether unfamiliar, argument, and although at times there is a tendency to overreach, Brunet's book succeeds in demonstrating, once again, that Vichy's legacies could no more easily be erased than its memory. At a more focused level, Brunet makes a real contribution by tracing the history of the Organization Committees across two regimes. This was no easy task. As the author tells us at least twice, the archives of the committees mysteriously disappeared at some point in the 1970s. At times in Brunet's study, their absence is sorely felt. But through serious research in archives across seven countries, Brunet has managed to piece together his story. Occasionally lapsing into the dissertation format from which this monograph emerged—we do not need all the details of all the reports he has read, and at times the historiographical debates could be quickly summarized in a sentence or two with details relegated to footnotes—Brunet nevertheless demonstrates repeatedly the degree to which his material revises the arguments or presumptions of others who have written on the committees, the Monnet Plan, and the background to the creation of the ECSC. He has, wisely,

concentrated on a key industry, steel, to provide coherence to his account. The coal industry also falls under Brunet's purview, although, as he warns us in the introduction, to a much lesser extent. That scaling back of a more ambitious two-industry study is an unfortunate choice, because coal inescapably enters the narrative as the essential raw material for the making of steel. The symbiotic facts of steel as the leading industry for French postwar modernization and the location of indispensable coking coal fields on German territory, facts that underlay Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann's conceptualization of a European Coal and Steel Community, produce a sense of lacunae as Brunet's Organization Committee history details the evolution of only one half of its story. Brunet has also elected to concentrate on structures and their personnel rather than on transnational networks between industrialists, despite the place of transnational economic orders at the center of his work. This is a conscious choice, but again one that might not have been in the best interests of this valuable study. The author may be correct that a reorientation towards the committees was a necessary correction, but without any effort to show either the existence or absence of such personal relationships developed in the course of the war and carried over into the crucial (for Brunet's study) postwar years, the reader cannot altogether be persuaded that cross-border connections do not also lie at the heart of this history of continuity. Still, Brunet has plenty to tell us about the history of the Organization Committees and how, despite their Vichy stain, they set a course for French economic reorganization after a disastrous war.

From the beginning of this monograph, Brunet cogently identifies the imperatives behind the creation of Organization Committees. German victory over France but not Britain shut French industry off from vital overseas imports and, most seriously, from one-third of the nation's 1939 source of coal. Just as grave, the incorporation of Alsace and Lorraine back into the Reich and the creation of a separate zone that combined the Pas-de-Calais and Nord departments with Belgium under military administration wiped off the Vichy map two of the most productive and resource-rich regions of France. At the same time, there was a fear that Germans would loot or append to their own industrial machine France's remaining big-industry units. Thus, to sustain some semblance of an economy under the most dislocating of circumstances, and to protect French command of the country's industrial infrastructure, Vichy rapidly created the Organization Committees in the summer of 1940 to rationalize production within their respective spheres. The same rationalizing imperative under equally dislocating, if different, circumstances following liberation in 1944 guaranteed that despite Communist insistence that all things Vichy must go, the remainder of the Resistance, including those congregated around de Gaulle, concluded that the toad of retaining the committees must be swallowed in some palatable format if France was to dig itself out of economic chaos and avoid potentially irreversible decline. Brunet is quite good at spelling out the rationale—at both critical points—for the creation and then prolongation of a new industrial order. He is equally impressive in arguing, at this early stage in his analysis, for the discontinuity in personnel between those industrialists who had controlled the steel industry before 1939 and those men who would be selected to run the Organization Committees for their expertise, their presumed openness to German New Order reorganization of the continent's economy, and the very fact that they were, to a certain degree, new men. This material is crucial for the development of Brunet's central thesis since the figures he identifies in the Vichy years would crop up time and again in the various post-Vichy recreations of the Organization Committees or their distribution complements, also dating from the Vichy years. Continuity in this history is as much one of people as it is of structures.

Whether the early chapters make the case for continuity between one European economic order and another can be questioned. During the war years, the Organization Committees could not function without integration into the German war economy, whether this be through sourcing, war orders, or division of spheres of production. Collaboration was built into the rationale and operation of these structures. Brunet deftly maneuvers within the greyer regions that have come to color our understanding of business collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. As Brunet points out, the same combination of decisions about war production to prevent the forced labor draft from depleting their labor pool can be interpreted as collaboration or resistance, depending on one's point of view. Neither term, he insists, clarifies the tangled world in which these Organization Committees were operating. In the same vein his work adds to the debate over wiggle room or coercion. In Vichy France proper, there was room to maneuver, an opportunity denied to firms in the Pas-de-Calais and the Nord. Yet, despite increasing integration into a German-led and German-modelled new order, it is difficult to see the forced coordination of the war years as much more than an expedient under deeply difficult circumstances. Brunet writes of the "receptiveness of the French to Nazi plans for a united European economy" (pp. 47-48). Nowhere does he demonstrate commitment on the part of French steel mandarins to the idea of postwar institutionalization of the cross-border economic collaboration that constituted Hitler's new order. The early chapters consequently succeed in reconstituting the history of Organization Committees, at least as these applied to the steel industry, and they also set up Brunet's subsequent argument for continuity beyond 1944. But whereas the introduction has primed readers for thinking towards the creation of the ECSC, these war year chapters, while provocative in the implications that can be drawn, do not provide the material for drawing a line from 1940 to 1950-1952. Here is where a search for personal connections and working relationships via the committees between French and German coal and steel men, and carried over into the postwar years, could have proved useful.

By all rights, the Organization Committees should have died with Vichy. In some of Brunet's strongest chapters, however, he shows how pragmatism and economic force majeure prevailed over ideology to preserve the committees as a core institution in the postwar restructuring of French industrial production. Reborn as Professional Offices, these organizations possessed only the fig leaf of nomenclature to obscure the obvious continuity—structure, people—that passed over the liberation demarcation line, which proved more porous than its predecessor. There were, to be sure, differences; representatives of labor unions and the state now sat on the directorial boards of these "offices." Productivity, rather than making do, now set the agenda. Even this was too much for Maurice Paul, the Communist Minister of Industrial Production, who abolished all Organization Committees, a.k.a. Professional Offices, in April 1946. Brunet notes the irony that resulted: the role of organizing steel production passed more firmly into the hands of the French steel industrialists and their professional organization, led by the very man who had headed steel's Organization Committee during Vichy and who had been purged from it in 1944. Labor, thanks to the Communist Paul, was out of the game. Moreover, those who favored a *dirigiste* state over an unbridled market in allocating resources and raw materials now looked to Jean Monnet's plan as the best mechanism for steering economic rebirth. Monnet, who had once called for the abolition of the committees, had by fall of 1943 come to recognize, along with other opponents of Vichy, that the utility of the Organization Committees in the face of overwhelming economic complications, and the expertise acquired by those individuals who had been running them since 1940, justified their continuation, with modifications, into the postwar era. Consequently, the committees underwent another incarnation, this time as Modernizing Commissions, which formed a central part of how the

Plan would function. Brunet stresses “the striking similarities” (p. 192) to be found between the commissions and the original committees under Vichy, again in organization and personnel.

The final chapter, however, which carries the narrative into the creation of the ECSC, is a disappointment. Much of the chapter concerns divisions in outlook between Monnet and the “new” steel men of the Vichy era, as well as a quarrel between different steel factions for the future of steel production under the plan. Brunet skillfully identifies the basis of the conflict and how Monnet, whom he portrays as a smart operator, if not always in a complimentary light, managed to keep the employers’ organization and its more Malthusian view at bay. But this all seems anti-climactic for a story about continuity. Indeed here, and in the conclusion that follows, the stress veers away from continuity to the sharp differences in purpose, and even in staffing, between Vichy’s Organizing Committees and what became the foundation of a truly new European economic order. To Brunet’s credit, he does not try to force his argument at this critical juncture. Nor need he, since the body of the book has amply demonstrated the central thesis of Vichy’s transitional influence, not out of ideological adherence but sheer necessity. This is a work that is worth reading. However, whoever is responsible for the index should not give up their day job.

NOTES

[1] Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

[2] Philip G. Nord, *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

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