

overseas have changed dramatically. For most Americans, US involvement in World Wars I and II was justified: Germany was threatening world democracy; it had to be stopped. The rationale for newer American offensives, however, is more murky. Equally important, America's style of warfare has become almost completely automated. For these reasons, argues Lair, America has now adopted a "comfort-for-morale" strategy (p. 20). In this new schema, the US military has replaced opportunities for nobility and heroism with ones for tourism and consumption.

Armed with Abundance is a ground-breaking book, one that brings together consumer and military historiography in fruitful ways. Lair calls for increased awareness of the abundance which accompanies America to war, and demonstrates how displays of American economic prowess abroad affect the morale of the foreign civilians that the US is ostensibly trying to empower. *Armed with Abundance* also traces the history of a powerful American narrative, that of the plucky and outmatched soldier, and shows how this narrative enables the world's greatest superpower to continue marching to war even as it wreaks unprecedented destruction. *Armed with Abundance* offers consumer and military historians important new avenues to explore, and it does so with the panache of a meticulous researcher and talented writer.

Donica Belisle

Women's and Gender Studies, Athabasca University
12th Floor, 10011 109 St, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S8, Canada
E-mail: donicab@athabascau.ca

BERTA, GIUSEPPE. *Fiat-Chrysler e la deriva dell'Italia industriale*. [Contemporanea.] Il Mulino, Bologna, 2011. 142 pp. € 14.00. [Translation by Christine Eida.] doi:10.1017/S0020859013000448

A warning from history: economic miracles were quashed with the drift of industrial Italy; evil rumours wafted around factories (the ones that still exist – not necessarily operating at full capacity but instead suffering from the pain of their decline). Sharp episodes of globalization punctuate the history of labour success in Italy. In his incisive book, the historian Giuseppe Berta helps us to understand these events.

At the beginning of his book, Berta refers to the miraculous bubble (in the first half of the 1980s) within which Italian firms tested remarkable ventures, involving both technical innovation and entrepreneurial reorganization, with a view to becoming global players (the most famous being Olivetti, Pirelli, and Fiat). Pointing to repeated declarations by then Fiat President Giovanni Agnelli, the author makes it clear that it was no longer about meeting the expectations of countries that wanted rapid industrialization (as had been the case with Brazil and Russia), but of preparing for the global trend towards "concentrating the number of producers". And so it was "imperative to develop alliances and acquisitions to attain the necessary size" (p. 12). Despite strategic clarity, Fiat did not survive the challenge and had to retreat to defend a "sanitized security line" (p. 13). Its dominance of the Italian market was a choice dictated therefore either by routine or harassment by competition. Giuseppe Berta then reconstitutes an increasingly dramatic process, in which, when the bubble burst, "the extreme fragility of the core of the vertex of Italian

capitalism" (p. 18) remained naked. Within their national borders, firms renounced plans for growth and innovation, "forever set behind the hills" (p. 11).

Berta moves on to analyse Fiat under Italian executive Sergio Marchionne's current leadership. With his vast knowledge of Italian industrialization, Berta argues that the intimate affinity between Fiat and Italy has been replaced by a divide between the global player and the nation's drift (p. 33). As a result, the Fiat of the twentieth century – "concerned with Italian primacy and cultivating its origins" (p. 30) – is over. The corporation that experienced the global crises of 2002 and 2008, as well as the end of its partnership with General Motors in 2005, is an entity that has opened borders and shed its skin (p. 26). Without any fondness for the past or for its homeland, it pursues its ability to be a chameleon, able to change effortlessly and according to circumstances. Instead of a strong national *tricolore* flag, it aims to be a mosaic in transition (p. 31). In July 2011, Fiat became the owner of a 53.5 per cent stake in Chrysler, the smallest of the big three US car makers in Detroit. Its challenge was "to transform two weaknesses into a new power" (p. 29).

In pointing out that Fiat-Chrysler is far from being a well-constructed and polished phenomenon, Giuseppe Berta argues that this fusion does not constitute a historical turnaround. Contrary to what the Italian media have claimed, it has not been a case of Chrysler's "salvation" by the country's most national company (p. 55). In his view, it is more a case of a "multinational group" being created whose architecture would be neither Italian nor American: the calculation of existing or potential opportunities would be decisive and there would have to be flexibility right from the start. This was the goal – an objective reflecting a "global logic" – that Marchionne took to a Fiat meeting in Betim (Minas Gerais, Brazil) in July 2011. In fact, while Asia became a strategic market target, in Brazil Fiat received a "definitive sanction of its autonomy" (p. 60). Soon afterwards, inconvenient signals with regard to persistent recession in the United States raised concerns about the overriding and crucial assumption behind the Fiat-Chrysler deal, namely the expectation that the US economy would generally improve on the one hand and that Detroit would be rescued from the quagmire on the other.

The possibility of a slump in investment planned for the United States, and also for Italy, left the situation even more delicate. And, mirroring the end of the Italian nationalist Fiat of the twentieth century, the seventy-year history of the United Auto Workers' (UAW) came to a halt too (p. 73). Threatened with extinction, along with the car makers, owing to the depression that started in 2008, the UAW accepted sour terms: salary reductions, more restricted rights, and a decrease in welfare coverage in exchange for shares in the new Chrysler (p. 67). Berta is adamant in this respect: it was the "only realistic choice that enabled them to preserve their existence" (p. 68). "Uncertain and dangerous" (p. 74), this conciliation left behind an uncertain balance in relations between capital and labour and demonstrated to the trade unions how much remained to be done, and how much innovation would be necessary, in the transition to the twenty-first century.

While the political and economic crises facing the Berlusconi government worsened in the second half of 2011, a characteristic tension between capital and labour returned to the scene at Italian car factories in the meantime. Amid the plurality of political forces, "an extremely solid conscience of itself, constituting an identity matrix" (p. 90), reappeared in the form of the Italian Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici (FIOM), which was striving to "renew its antagonistic identity" (p. 102). Unable to identify opportunities for such efforts, Berta notes an out-of-place, resuscitated memory: completely changed trade-union conditions "to the point of no longer having anything in common with the climate

in which environment that political tradition was germinated” (p. 90). He tactfully suggests that “the desire to seek analogies in history should always give way to a verification of concrete differences” (p. 91).

Berta identifies one other reason beyond the salary issue for the resurgence of trade-union conflict in Fiat plants. To keep them operating, Marchionne’s global logic started to require “a certainty and stability in labour objectives” which the trade union would not guarantee (p. 95). Marchionne’s strategy required efficiency, productivity, and strategic commitment on the one hand, and deregulation, a decrease in union influence on management, and an end to strikes and other forms of resistance on the other. This agenda disturbed trade-union representation, which replied by offering resistance, resorting to analogies with an obsolete past.

However, Marchionne’s audacity reflected not only corporate hostility to labour rights, taxed as “an emblem of Italian anomalies” (p. 119). It was also the employer’s offensive against trade unionism and a weakened labour base. Free from the role of defending the country, unprofitable factories could be liquidated. Assembly lines could be transferred to Poland. Investment would be withheld at plants whose labour relations were complicated by troublemakers: any problem could lead to the suspension or termination of planned investment. Production could thus be silenced, cut, or relocated. Of course, in order to be able to mutate so much, Fiat-Chrysler would have to be incredibly flexible and efficient. Sergio Marchionne might therefore have been bluffing, but it is worth considering that his tax residence is in Switzerland; he has both Canadian and Italian nationality; and he is not an executive qualified within the car-making environment. The workers, however, do not have the same escape routes at their disposal.

Berta argues that, faced with this, there are two fronts on which Italy will have to succeed in order to resume its course: innovation and creativity in trade-union policies, something beyond workers’ resistance to capitalist hegemony. Berta muses that “if trade union experience needs vivifying contact with the sphere of production”, perhaps this is a case of pursuing “matrixes and industrial features of workers’ organizations. [...] Perhaps one should consider a trade union able to embrace all industrial categories, to become a cohesive force” (pp. 69, 135). Two conditions would have to be fulfilled though: the new institution would need to have a unitary structure and strong legitimacy when confronting companies (p. 133).

Another route that needs to find its way is the path followed by Italy’s industrial and manufacturing heart, Piedmont, and its capital Turin. The Italians may be well-known producers of food and wine, they may be skilled craftsmen and designers too, but this will not keep them at the frontline of the global industrial economy. Berta does not hesitate in reconsidering the place, at the defendant’s table, where the factory was put during the 1990s (p. 116). A robust economic centre is a long-established fact in Piedmont’s history; it has been responsible for jobs, growth, and productive potential and has had a significant impact on the culture of its people and their day-to-day lives. Its value should not be underestimated in favour of the service sector or the commercial centres dispersed along the roadsides. “Fiat-Chrysler, this new and still indistinct identity, with an unknown fate” – Berta concludes (p. 142) – exposes “demands that, otherwise, would not be explicit”.

Antonio Negro

Universidade Federal da Bahia/CNPq
E-mail: negro@ufba.br