

Mark R. Wilson. *Destructive Creation: American Business and the Winning of World War II.* American Business, Politics, and Society Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 392 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8122-4833-3.

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Many historical studies of World War II attribute much of the Allied victory to the Allies' remarkable advantages in equipment, machines, and matériel. *Destructive Creation: American Business and the Winning of World War II* contributes to this argument by offering an up-close assessment of America's business climate during the mid-twentieth century. According to author Mark R. Wilson, the United States contributed almost two-thirds of all matériel used by the Allies, including naval ships, watercraft, and deck guns; tanks, trucks, and jeeps; and small arms, crew-served weapons, and ammunition. His work examines the ways in which the United States was able to quickly mobilize its industrial economy and how this mobilization affected larger political and economic developments. Ultimately, the major purpose of *Destructive Creation* is to better explain the implications that economic mobilization had on the United States, as well as how the manipulation of the World War II narrative by business leaders led directly to the military-industrial complex that dictated Cold War policy and continues to exist today.

Through the use of new sources found in corporate and military archives, Wilson offers a brand of revisionist history that provides counter-arguments to much of what is presented in exist-

ing literature. He acknowledges that most narratives propose one of two arguments: either that American business leaders and corporations made patriotic contributions to the US war effort or that they exploited the war for personal profit and political gain. Instead, Wilson illustrates how the American government, businesses, and public together embraced the "destructive creation" of a giant capitalist economy for the sole purpose of annihilating their wartime enemies.

Destructive Creation casts a wide net when pursuing evidence to support its overarching arguments. Politics are discussed, including the important role of both capitalism and socialism in shaping the wartime economy. During the conflict, many progressives feared the growing power of corporations and desired for the government to lead the war effort, while conservatives feared an expansion of New Deal policies and wanted businesses to be left alone. In the end, a compromise was reached. Government regulations were increased, while companies profited immensely from war production. Though business and political leaders were often antagonistic toward one another, both relied on the other to achieve their short- and long-term goals. Together, these two factions created the "Arsenal of Democracy" (p. 2).

Wilson also looks past the political and industrial giants to give attention to some of the home front's smaller players. Many minor companies, for example, found war work a burden and felt victimized by factors outside of their control. Government overregulation, federal support for labor unions, and the military takeover of private facilities irritated business owners, who found themselves even more staunchly opposed to government after the war than they had before.

The major, concluding argument of *Destructive Creation* is that the coupling of conservative corporations and the military services in World War II led immediately to the establishment of the US military-industrial complex. During and immediately after the war, business leaders relied on propaganda and revisionist histories to claim that the private corporations were solely responsible for the Allied victory, relegating the federal government to a mere supporting role. This was done primarily to ensure that business leaders would rise above policymakers to lead the United States during the postwar era, but also to respond to corporate fears that government, if left unrestrained, would eventually eclipse private enterprise entirely. Their views were adopted by most of America, which allowed business leaders to build a successful postwar economy without government interference. However, the author reminds readers that the overreliance of the US military on private enterprise led to the almost-entire takeover of the defense industry by corporations by the mid-1960s.

Destructive Creation offers significant contributions to the history of the US home front during the Second World War, which include important evaluations of the federal government, private corporations, and public involvement. Wilson's conclusions—that America's business leaders during World War II were ultimately successful both in winning the war by out-producing every other participating country and winning the peace by declaring themselves solely responsible for victo-

ry—are important ones, successfully highlighting the tumultuous climate of the US home front during the war.

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