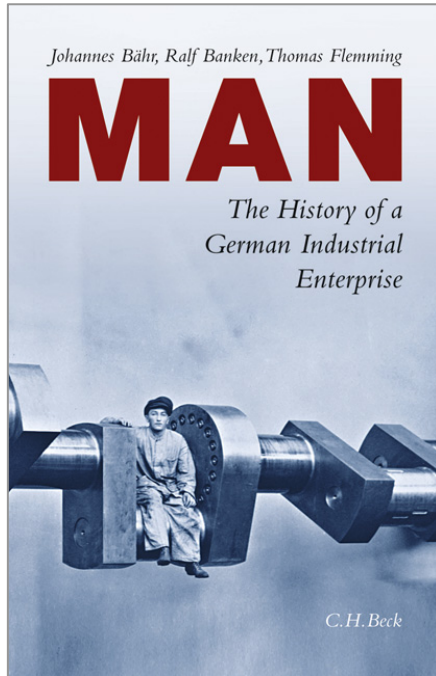


Unverkäufliche Leseprobe



**Johannes Bähr, Ralf Banken,
Thomas Flemming**
MAN

The History of German Industrial Enterprise

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Bill Chilcott, Jeffrey Verhey and Timothy Slater
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Introduction

The MAN Corporation is known throughout the world as a producer of commercial vehicles and diesel motors. But people who see its trucks and busses on the streets usually do not realize that MAN is also one of the oldest German companies, whose history goes back far beyond the dawn of the age of motorization. Together with its predecessor firms, MAN is one of the few enterprises that has shaped the development of German industry from the outset.

The company originated with the opening of the St. Antony ironworks in Osterfeld, now a borough of Oberhausen, on 18 October 1758. From this starting point in the time of Frederick the Great its path led through the Gutehoffnungshütte (Gute Hoffnung Ironworks), as the coal and iron producing company was called until 1986, to the present-day MAN Group. It is unusual, even on the international level, that a company can look back on such a long history. If we reflect that only successful companies can grow old and that today the average lifespan of a company is about twenty years, a two hundred and fifty year anniversary is the mark of an extraordinary success.¹ MAN has maintained its position in the market through all the ups and downs of German industrial history. During this period, the form of government and the economic system have changed several times, there have been revolutions and world wars, and the state of technology has been completely transformed, from the introduction of the steam engine to the spread of the Internet. The mere fact that MAN has continued to exist throughout all these changes would be a sufficient reason to study its history in detail. However, MAN and its predecessor companies have not only been able repeatedly to adapt to new conditions, but have also helped produce important changes. From the beginnings of industry in the Ruhr area and the construction of steam engines in Germany, by way of the introduction of rotary printing presses, diesel motors, and the motorization of heavy goods vehicles, down to the most recent innovations in engines for large vehicles and ships, the history of MAN is a history of change. The company and its predecessors have constantly transformed themselves through mergers, takeovers, and shifts in their production profile. The core enterprises, MAN (which was written as M.A.N. until 1986) and Gutehoff-

nungshütte, have changed their names four times. In addition to the roots in the Ruhr area, from which the Oberhausen coal and steel company Gutehoffnungshütte emerged, there is a second tradition that emerged from engineering works founded in Augsburg and Nuremberg, to which the name of the present-day MAN group (Maschinenfabrik Augsburg–Nürnberg) also goes back. After the First World War, M.A.N. was taken over by Gutehoffnungshütte, which then adopted, when the group was formed in 1986, the name of the subsidiary company that had merged with it. The production profile and the regional structure of the enterprise group also changed. A coal and steel company became a heavy vehicle and engine producer, and the company's headquarters were ultimately moved from Oberhausen to Munich. These transformations and the accompanying change in names and the focus of production may also be connected with the fact that the history of the MAN group is not as well known as that of other firms with a rich tradition. However, the contribution made by Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. to the development of German industry is in no way less than that made by Krupp or Siemens.

In preparation for its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary, MAN has decided to have historians research and produce the first general history of the company. The authors carried out this task within less than two years. They were to do so only because they were able to rely on MAN's and Gutehoffnungshütte's excellent archival holdings. Gutehoffnungshütte had already begun its own historical archive in 1937, while MAN established factory archives in Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Gustavsburg in 1943. In both cases the documentation is so extensive that it poses a real challenge for the historian. MAN's historical archive in Augsburg, into which the earlier works archive has been absorbed, now preserves about 1.5 million documents on the history of the company. The Gutehoffnungshütte historical documents are now in the Rhine-Westphalia Business Archive in Cologne. They include about 45,000 documents, account books, drawings, printed texts, and advertisements. In addition, there are more than 12,000 pictures and photographs.²

Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. also had the history of their companies documented in commemorative volumes written by people who worked for the group. Such a volume was published in 1910 on the occasion of Gutehoffnungshütte's hundredth anniversary celebration—at that time, the signing of the contract forming the Jacobi, Haniel, and Huysen Ironworks was considered the founding date of the company. For Gutehoffnungshütte's hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary (1935) and for M.A.N.'s hundredth anniversary, Fritz Büchner wrote comprehensive chronicles.³ Although in recent decades the archives of Gutehoffnungshütte and MAN have been used more intensively than

almost any other German business archive, there is still no history of this company that meets scholarly standards.⁴

The present book is also the first comprehensive account dealing with the history of both MAN and Gutehoffnungshütte. It is conceived, in accord with the historical development of this group, as a twofold history. In the first two parts of this volume the two origins of the present MAN group in Oberhausen and Augsburg/Nuremberg, which remained unconnected until 1920, are treated separately. In the following decades, in which M.A.N. was a subsidiary of Gutehoffnungshütte, their business contracts were increasingly interwoven with each other until the merger in 1986, when the dividing lines disappeared entirely. In order to produce a more coherent account, the authors decided to give only secondary attention to the Gutehoffnungshütte group's other companies. This is particularly true for the foreign trade company Ferrostaal and the Deutsche Werft. The history of each of these two companies would require a separate, comprehensive study.

The central question in this book is which factors made possible the unusually long history of the Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. companies. An important role was no doubt played by technological achievements without which such a development would not have been conceivable. The general orientation was nonetheless ultimately determined by business decisions, which are therefore given special emphasis in our account. Decision-making situations are the key to understanding the history of a company. This holds particularly true for companies like MAN and Gutehoffnungshütte that have transformed themselves several times in the course of their history. Both firms have always had to adapt to new challenges, whether in the form of new technologies, the emergence of new market conditions, or changes in the political environment. This book shows how the two companies reacted in such situations and why each of them chose this or that solution and not a different one.

The central course set in the history of Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. will therefore be dealt with in considerable detail. Why did the St. Antony, Gutehoffnungshütte, and Neu Essen ironworks join together in 1808 as a single company? How did it happen that the machinery factories in Augsburg and Nuremberg merged and that after World War I M.A.N. was incorporated into the Gutehoffnungshütte group? How did the change from a coal and steel group to a vehicle and engineering works group take place after World War II? However, among the most important decisions made in the history of this group were those concerning changes in technological orientation. The construction of the first diesel engine in the Augsburg engineering works and

M.A.N.'s further development of diesel technology were so important that they must also be described in detail here.

Another important point to be discussed is the company's activity during the Third Reich. The role of Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. during the Nazi regime will be investigated systematically for the first time, from the attitude toward the regime adopted by the firm's leadership through its development and involvement in weapons production to the use of forced labor during the war. Up to now, the extensive literature on the history of business firms under the Third Reich has lacked a corresponding study of Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. At most, a few publications dealing with specific aspects—in particular, the role of the then head of the group, Paul Reusch—have appeared.⁵

The last part of this book gives special attention to the construction of the group in 1986 and MAN's subsequent development. The change undergone in the 1980s and 1990s has been described in this way for hardly any other large German company. Important clues and discoveries can also be gained here from interviews with contemporaries.

Because of the focus of this book, a few other aspects of the history of the MAN corporation that deserve more detailed study could be discussed only very briefly. These include the company's welfare policy—in this area Gutehoffnungshütte and M.A.N. were pioneers among large German firms—and internal relationships. Both companies' welfare achievements have already been described in numerous studies, to which we refer the reader.⁶ It was also impossible, in the framework of this book, to examine all the areas of production in which MAN and its predecessor companies have been active.

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