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# Solvay

## SOLVAY HISTORY OF A MULTINATIONAL FAMILY FIRM

Kenneth Bertrams | Nicolas Coupain | Ernst Homburg

*Par Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas  
Coupain, Ernst Homburg  
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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurErnest Solvay, philanthropist and organizer of the world-famous Solvay conferences on physics, discovered a profitable way of making soda ash in 1861. Together with a handful of associates, he laid the foundations of the Solvay company, which successfully branched out into other chemicals, plastics and pharmaceuticals. Since its emergence in 1863, Solvay has maintained world leadership in the production of soda ash. This is the first scholarly book on the history of the Solvay company, which was one of the earliest chemical multinationals and today is among the world's twenty largest chemical companies. It is also one of the largest companies in the field to preserve its family character. The authors analyze the company's 150-year history (1863-2013) from economic, political and social perspectives, showing the enormous impact geopolitical events had on the company and the recent consequences of global

competition. *Revue de presse* 'This is perhaps the most important European corporate history to be published this century. We knew about Ernest Solvay the philanthropist and the role of his company in the complex of European cartels from other histories, but for the first time we now have a highly professional account from the inside of a company that was the earliest and largest European chemical multinational, yet that remained a successful and well-managed family partnership until its public flotation on the Brussels stock exchange in 1967 and further global expansion and diversification as a public joint stock company.' Leslie Hannah, University of Tokyo 'Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm is a thoroughly researched history of a leading chemical company that deserves to be better known outside Belgium. One of its strengths is the way that all the various facets of Solvay's business (structure, strategy, marketing, technology) are constantly addressed throughout the volume. This is an excellent history of Solvay that will be of great interest to both business historians and historians of chemistry.' Peter Morris, Science Museum, London 'This scholarly book is the commanding study of one of the largest and oldest chemical enterprises in the world. The well-known authors explain to us Solvay's longevity, challenges, stress, and success. All major aspects of a dynamic enterprise, such as management, technological change, finances, competition, role of the founding family, and even touching sponsorship, are convincingly addressed. While the previous Solvay book lasted for 50 years, this one - based on its excellent quality - will outlive it!' Harm G. Schrter, University of Bergen, and President, European Business History Association 'With the publication of this book, an extraordinary instance of scholarly neglect has finally been put right, and in grand style. Based on a vast array of primary evidence, the authors provide a full and multifaceted account of the Solvay company, one of the most long-lived and successful chemical firms in history. The evolving business strategies of this family multinational, its technological development, and its social initiatives are all examined closely, as are the personalities and family dynamics that have shaped its long history.' Raymond G. Stokes, University of Glasgow 'well produced with a thorough bibliography, a useful index, and many tables and figures this is a fascinating story, well told and highly recommended.' Jeffrey Allan Johnson, *Ambix* '[An] outstanding book Solvay is especially recommended to business historians, but those with an interest in the history of science and technology over the last 150 years will find much of interest.' Peter Reed, *The British Journal for the History of Science* Presentation de l'auteur Ernest Solvay, philanthropist and organizer of the world-famous Solvay conferences on physics, discovered a profitable way of making soda ash in 1861. Together with a handful of associates, he laid the foundations of the Solvay company, which successfully branched out into other chemicals, plastics and pharmaceuticals. Since its emergence in 1863, Solvay has maintained world leadership in the production of soda ash. This is the first scholarly book on the history of the Solvay company, which was one of the earliest chemical multinationals and today is among the world's twenty largest chemical companies. It is also one of the largest companies in the field to preserve its family character. The authors analyze the company's 150-year history (1863-2013) from economic, political and social perspectives, showing the enormous impact geopolitical events had on the company and the recent consequences of global competition.