

Ford's Bordeaux–Blanquefort plants: a history (1969–1982)

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FORD HAD OPERATED A SMALL PLANT IN BORDEAUX between 1917 and 1927, but the firm's manufacturing heritage had thoroughly disappeared in Aquitaine by the 1960s and its sole representation there had remained its main dealers, such as Palau. Ford's postwar focus on the Poissy plant near Paris had cancelled any slight chance for south-west France to be reinserted into Ford's European production system and France seemed to have 'no future' in Ford's industrial plans in the 1950s-1960s. All that remained for the region was the passion for the Le Mans racing adventure and dealers fighting for market-share (quite successfully because Ford sold twice as many cars in 1966 as in 1954, when it still owned the Poissy plant¹). In the 1960s and 1970s, the roles of Netherlands and Belgium in Ford's industrial system were developed – before that of the Netherlands declined – but it seemed that England and Germany and their complementary Belgian plant would be sufficient for the needs of the firm on a European scale.

But, from the 1960s, the growth of car production in Europe created pressures for change in upstream supply and new greenfield factories had to be established. All over Europe, businesses triggered competition among regions to get the largest amount of financial (investment grants) and tax advantages for projected plants. Companies sought regions which had inherited manufacturing tradition, skills and habits of discipline. And political arguments were raised among lobbies and influential networks of politicians and parties: political science joined economics in industry. Unexpectedly Bordeaux was fortunate enough to fit with these moves: two neighbouring plants were established in its outskirts, in Blanquefort (in the Gironde *département* – or district – and in the Aquitaine region). Both plants became part of Ford's globalised production system and beacons for technical Fordism. Their long-term future has several times been at stake since then, but they remain a key element of efficiency and competitiveness within the Ford group at the beginning of the 21st century. This chapter² will focus on a historical story of these plants in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Another chapter³ will analyse their industrial evolution in the 1970s-1980s and discuss the role of such plants in Ford's restructuring of its industrial structures across Europe along the lines of 'lean management'.

1. Industrial jobs in declining areas?

Why did Ford return to Bordeaux and choose this region to extend its industrial integration at a European and a transatlantic level? Ford decided to insert France within its production and logistics system at the end of the 1960s. Henry Ford II and the FMC pondered the opportunity to establish a plant in France, as it was then one of the few western European countries where Ford did not pro-

duce cars, even though it was a growing market. This project had been considered since the mid-1960s, when the French government underlined the absence of any Ford plant from France while the French market had become a target for the firm. On 13 June 1966, Henry Ford met the minister of Economy & Finance Michel Debré and then Georges Pompidou, the Prime Minister. The latter reproached him for neglecting France and even locating plants all around it, notably in Saarlouis in Germany, just a few miles from the north-eastern border, instead of choosing Alsace-Lorraine. At that time, France was seen as an 'ugly' country by American elites, partly because of the influence of trade unions but also because Gaullists had just quit the management of the NATO alliance and seemed animated by anti-Americanism.⁴

Ford continued to look anyway for industrial areas where experience and skills were available along with low levels of wages. Political reasons may also have enticed Ford to set up a plant in France in order to alleviate its image of a "German" or a "British" company and to capitalise on a profile as a "French manufacturer" in order to promote its brand image among customers with "patriotic" motives. France had become a large market for car manufacturers and Ford might hope that the location of a plant there could favour the development of its credibility and sales. Henry Ford II broached these issues with the French government when he attended the Le Mans 24 Hours race in the mid-1960s. But the actual stimulus for action came from the need for new low cost production centers to by-pass German and British heavy social costs.

The Valencia factory for the front-drive *Fiesta* and engines was an element of that industrial strategy. But the *Fiesta* also required a new automatic transmissions facility, mainly for the US market, where such transmissions were massively used, and for the European market where customers for top & middle range cars had begun to request such a feature. Ford had designed its first system of automatic gearboxes in 1950 (Fordmatic) and had equipped some European models (*Zephyr* and *Zodiac*) with them since 1957. The *Consul* and *Granada* models were to be equipped with a new automatic gearbox, code-named C3, which would be manufactured in the new plant.

In order for the project of creating a plant in France to be developed, Ford had to contribute to France's national policy of regional remodelling (*aménagement du territoire*), which intended to balance redundancies in collapsing sectors with new jobs in fast-growing industries. After the government had privileged industrialisation in western rural areas since the 1950s, the automotive industry had become a key element to reindustrialise the northern and eastern regions. Far from being the capital of wine business only, Bordeaux, despite missing the first industrial revolution, had been deeply involved in the first stage of the second industrial revolution from the 1890s. But these developments had been mainly concentrated in a limited area of Bordeaux⁵, around the harbour, in a kind of "island of industry" in rural Aquitaine. Local specialties were mechanical and metal-working. One key sector had been the huge shipyards; but they had lost momentum since the 1950s and were closed down at the end of the 1960s. Numerous metal-working and mechanical plants followed the same path, either because local and family-owned middle-sized companies could not face national competition or because local branches of national firms were judged inefficient. Unemployment in the Bordeaux area had climbed to the level of regions regarded de-industrialised, and the local authorities were concerned by such a drift towards permanent crisis.

2. A political challenge: to re-industrialise Bordeaux

Local authorities' concerns meshed with Parisian objectives: new plants had to be installed in Bordeaux either to take care of the victims of the crisis of ailing sectors or to welcome rural youngsters from all over Aquitaine and especially the Médoc area – north of Bordeaux – who were made available by the modernisation of agriculture. High civil servants in Paris – from the ministry of

Industry and from DATAR, an institution designated to re-industrialise provincial regions – and members of Parliament coming from areas facing deindustrialisation were accustomed to argue about locations when national and transnational groups intended to set up large factories in France. When Ford's previous project to consider a new plant in France was leaked in 1966, a real tug-of-war took place in those elites circles: everybody pleaded in favour of his region to receive such a bonanza.

The first contacts between the Bordeaux authorities and Ford had begun in February 1969, and detailed reports on Gironde's ability to host a Ford plant were presented to the firm between April and September 1969. The first clue to Ford's interest in a plant in the Bordeaux area came on 7 February 1969 when a commercial advisor of Ford-Germany, Dworak, asked the French administration for data about the possibility of the establishment of a Ford plant in France. The south-western area was rapidly targeted and the Bordeaux project was known within the company as the "Texas Program", as if Aquitaine – rich with natural gas (and small oil fields) – could become some *eldorado* thanks to its human resources. The project compared the merits of Ambès and Bassens, both in industrial areas along the Garonne; Bègles, a traditional industrial suburb; and Blanquefort, a rural area being rapidly urbanised and industrialised. The Bassens site would have been most symbolic of the reconversion of the harbour area and shipyards because it was located along the Garonne harbour itself. But the Blanquefort one seemed better adapted to the needs of the company, because of the large area available and the proximity of the airport, which would allow direct links to British and German Ford offices.

Several Ford executives visited Gironde and Ardennes, among other locations, to compare sites, and they held discussions at the same time with DATAR representatives. Various missions gauged both sites (2 September 1969, 25 June 1970, 6 July 1970, 14 & 15 July 1970; 5, 6 & 7 August 1970), and several studies were sent to Ford by the French administration (2 September 1969, 17 September 1969, 17 July 1970). The process matured when, on 27 January 1970, chairman Henry Ford II met with President Pompidou himself at the Élysée Palace in Paris. Further studies were conducted in April-June 1970. Jérôme Monod, DATAR's chief, chaired the final decision-making discussions with representatives of the company, among whom Stanley Gillen, Ford Europe chairman (30 June 1970) and Paul Lorenz, Ford Europe president, who visited the Gironde sites of Bassens and Blanquefort (14 July 1970). A seven member delegation toured the area in July to evaluate transport logistics and various technical topics. Further discussions concentrated on details with national and local authorities. The company succeeded in securing a few significant advantages: the land, located in a swampy area, was to be entirely drained and prepared at the expense of public authorities, which would also build access roads too. The training of recruits would be handled by public labour entities; and energy inputs would be provided by the State utility corporation EDF. The plant was integrated, therefore, in an "industrial project", a large scale industrial investment which would be managed through a middle-term planning process.

On 26 August 1970, the choice in favour of Bordeaux was announced officially by Henry Ford II through a personal letter to President Pompidou: "I am happy to confirm that we have completed the arrangement to purchase land near Bordeaux. That field, of 298 acres, has been purchased to support the further development of Ford in France. A decision about the final use of that piece of land will be reached by the next meeting of our executive board. We can anticipate in advance the expansion of our activities in France, which, I am convinced, will benefit the economy and population of this area of Bordeaux as well as our company." The final version of the Texas Program was presented by Lee Iacocca and Robert Stevenson to Ford's executive committees on 8 December 1970⁶, then ratified by Ford's board.

3. Ford's project at the heart of a political fight (August–September 1970)

The decision came at a moment when the mayor of Bordeaux, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, had just become the leader of the right-wing majority in Parliament, after the freshly elected President Pompidou (1969-1974) nominated him as Prime Minister in June 1969 (he remained in office up to July 1972). Chaban-Delmas could thus exert a favourable influence in support of his own area during negotiations with Ford. As a result, Ford's decision was portrayed as a political success for Chaban-Delmas. Opponents therefore waged an offensive against the use of his Prime Ministerial power in favour of Bordeaux at the expense of depressed north-eastern areas, especially Champagne-Ardenne, the region where Charleville-Mézières is located.

A key center-leftist opponent of these years, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber (or JSS), had built his political profile as a modernist, espousing economic development and able as a leftist to reassure the middle classes about good management, especially since he was sustained by the weekly magazine he owned, *L'Express*, which he had created in 1953 and developed since 1963 following the *Time* and *Newsweek* models. He had been elected president of the Parti radical, a small centre-left party. He was preparing for future presidential elections and he had been elected member of Parliament in a Lorraine district, in Nancy. He denounced Chaban-Delmas's "abuse of influence" in the Ford case and seized a formidable opportunity to assert himself as the flagship of opposition against Chaban-Delmas when that latter's deputy died suddenly (on 26 July 1970), thus requiring a by-election under the constitution. JSS launched a harsh campaign to challenge him. During a press conference with Chaban-Delmas on 26 August, to announce the Ford project, JSS rushed to the microphone as a *L'Express* journalist and was the sole newsman to speak – though only to attack the Prime Minister. Finally, the press conference was terminated. The Ford communiqué announcing the decision on the plant was published on 27 August. On 30 August, JSS accused the government of bias in favour of Bordeaux and, more gravely, alleged that Ford had no finally chosen Bordeaux before the by-election, that, he told, "the decision hadn't been made". But in its archives, still unpublished in 2003, a Ford executive declared: "In fact the DATAR had tried, as much as it could, to influence Ford to choose the Ardennes; it was Ford who had inclined toward Bordeaux."⁷ The decision about Bordeaux had been taken before the death of Chaban-Delmas' deputy. Henry Ford had himself sent a letter to to declare that the choice of Bordeaux had been settled, and that only the choice of the precise location and the decision to purchase had yet to be completed.

Ford thus became indirectly involved in an internal French struggle and had to wait until the tornado had cleared. Chaban-Delmas was reelected, kept his Prime Ministerial job, and JSS went on with his dazzling political life until 1974. "*L'affaire de Bordeaux*"⁸ left no durable trace in general history nor in Ford history, but it was a flamboyant and dramatic curtain-raiser for the history of the Gironde Ford plants themselves. In fact, Ford had to come to some kind of a compromise with French authorities. It chose to establish a further plant in north-eastern France: in 1972, it bought an existing but declining factory in Charleville-Mézières which specialised in public works equipment and belonged to the ailing group Richier. Ford later transformed it into a plant delivering climate control equipment (radiators, air-conditioners and conditioned-air systems).

Evidence suggests that Ford's choice of its factory in Gironde was based on technical, industrial, social and financial requisites. The case had been studied for at least a year before any decision was reached. No outsider or non-professional motives could explain such a choice in favour of Gironde instead of Charleville-Mézières. But administrative and political powers nevertheless focused on Ford's project. In Bordeaux, the *Comité d'expansion Bordeaux-Aquitaine*, a local think-tank rich with experts from the university and consultants, had gathered thick files to ponder the economic effects of the establishment of such a manufacturing plant. Bordeaux City – through its *Bureau de recherche*

et d'accueil, another but smaller think-tank – and the *Chamber of commerce & industry of Bordeaux* – a key entity gathering representatives of local businessmen – had all somehow pulled their weight together despite their rivalry order to woo the American company. At this time, the area had already convinced or was on the verge of convincing several other firms such as Michelin to choose Bordeaux as a location for a new plant. During the same year 1970, IBM itself announced an investment there on 5 May, Siemens on 19 July and TRW (an American electronics firm) in August. There is no evidence that Ford benefitted from any out-of-the-way favours which could have by-passed regular or usual channels. The terms of agreement it reached were commonplace French-style “industrial policy”, mixing influences from the Administration, Paris governmental powers and local powers, all pledging forms of subsidies, tax benefits and support in recruiting and training manpower.

4. A well-timed industrial project (1970–1971)

Through this experience, Ford came to learn how to tackle the *modus operandi* of French politics and administration. It quickly understood how to win support from the various sources of public resources, and it was granted several subsidies. Local powers – those of the *Communauté urbaine de Bordeaux* or CUB, a newly-created metropolitan government – invested about FRF 22 millions to prepare the field for the plant⁹, between December 1970 and June 1971, with the help of loans from the stage agency DATAR. State grants were pumped in too amounting to 25% of Ford's local investments. The CUB also invested to link the plant to water supplier because it needed huge amounts of industrial water for its manufacturing process. It then set up a road system around the plant and a railway track several hundreds meters long. The site was located in an area which had been earmarked for industry purposes, and another company selected an adjacent location, a middle-sized chemical facility. A neighbouring motorway could be reached easily and could link rapidly with the airport. There was also a large transit logistical zone dedicated to freighters (*Bordeaux-Fret*, managed by the Chamber of commerce & industry of Bordeaux) and later a further motorway going north to Paris and to north-western Europe, as well as Bordeaux harbours.

After becoming officially the owner of the site on 9 January 1971, an engineering program – designed in Detroit – organised the building of the plant. The rapidly rising public works company Bouygues was awarded the general contract: the cost was FRF 186 millions of which 134 millions went to Bouygues. There were 71 sub-contractors and 600 permanent employees on the building site. The deadline was met on time: the plant structure was ready only sixteen months later. Ford invested about FRF 550 millions, of which 400 millions were for production equipment. Its usual suppliers, especially in Germany, were fully involved. Ford France borrowed money from its parent company; it issued equity for an amount of FRF 138,8 millions, and its capital reached FRF 208,8 millions in 1971. It obtained middle and long term loans from the partly state-owned bank *Crédit national*. Finally it received a grant for industrial development from the *Fonds de développement économique et social* for FRF 55 millions, that is to say 10% of the overall investment.

5. Blanquefort crowned as a Ford's capital in France (1973–1982)

The first Blanquefort plant was inaugurated on 19 June 1973 by Henry Ford II himself, Lee Iacocca, president of FMC, and some fifteen corporate vice-presidents, among a crowd of local authorities and elected representatives. Some time later, Ford's development of a small car (the Bobcat project) led to the *Fiesta* car program and to the birth of the Valencia plant in Spain. Ford had then to man-

ufacture key components for that brand new vehicle. Some of them (especially the engines) were to be produced in Valencia itself, but the company decided in 1973 to set up another factory in Bordeaux – called *Transaxale* – which would be earmarked to make front-wheel drive transmissions for that car. Linking Valencia and Bordeaux by road-freightliners was easy and the Blanquefort site offered plenty of room for another facility. Ford invested in that second plant FRF 417 millions (or one hundred millions dollars), which amounted to 12% of the overall financial package dedicated to the Bobcat project. Construction started in August 1974 and was completed by Bouygues in September 1975 to establish a 42,000 m² facility. It was inaugurated on 16 June 1976 by John MacDougall, chairman of Ford of Europe, and Chaban-Delmas.

Both plants then became key parts of Ford's global and European manufacturing mass-production system. Bordeaux "Autotrans" plant delivered 85% of its products (C3 automatic gearboxes up to the 1980s) to the USA in the 1970s, and the remaining amount went to German and British assembly lines. The second plant sent most of its production of manual gear-boxes to the Valencia factory, and also provided German and British plants with its production. It was only one of three plants specialised in manual power train components, together with Halewood (near Liverpool) and Cologne. Ford's Brazilian assembly-plant also imported these gearboxes, in spite of its difficulty in guaranteeing regular payments.

By July 1971, a Ford unit had begun to recruit employees for the *Autotrans* plant. 1,100 workers had been hired by May 1973 and 2,300 people by December 1974. In fact, no employees from defunct Bordeaux shipyards joined the Ford plant, because working conditions and skills had no real common points. The factory attracted mainly young men who had to be trained thoroughly to reach technical expertise. As a result, Ford created a training center in April 1974. The Blanquefort site thus became a pole for about four thousands people (only 7 to 8% women), which ranked it as a giant outfit in Aquitaine. It was actually the first privately-owned large business in Gironde and it was matched only by the IBM plant – though Bordeaux City and CUB, the Gironde *Département* services and the Bordeaux main hospital had similar levels of employment. Three-quarters of employees were under the age of 35 in 1978, including one third under 25, as juniors constituted an important part of the labour force, both as first recruitment and to fill places due to the turnover resulting from difficulties in adaptation to the industrial pace and schedules (two or three-shifts and week-end work)¹⁰.

Social tensions were revealed in early strikes. A one-day strike – for a wage increase – took place three months after starting production, on 11 September 1973, and trade-unions sections, recently established, seized that opportunity to structure their organisation. Obvious gaps in the settling of both plants' communities had to be resolved. Strikers asked for a network of coaches to pick up employees; initiatives to establish better security and comfort on the job; and bonuses to offset the effects of Taylorism or Fordism. Another strike lasted three weeks in March-April 1974. Discontent had matured spontaneously and young employees, especially within the maintenance department, took action suddenly and were rallied by trade-unions. They asked for a definition of job and wage classifications and a reinforcement of security rules and equipment. Despite an initial intransigent attitude – police were called in to free access to the plants through pickets lines –, the management agreed to several demands, even if it refused to extend wage raises. But the mood in industrial relations relaxed with the development of the work of the department of human resources. The early strikes expressed tensions in the opening of the production system, which required new solutions, often quite different from initially designed schemes. The social system and way of life of both plants had to be improved little by little as well as production. Only a few short-lived strikes occurred after this, over details of the organisation of hours- and work-time.

6. Struggle for financial competitiveness (1980–1982)

More worrying were periods of recession, when slumps imposed short-time lay-offs during the slumps of 1974-1975 and of 1979-1983. The latter led to several periods of overall shut-down of some departments, and even to some early retirements, for instance in 1981-1982: the average number of employees dwindled from 4,097 in 1978 to 2,415 in 1983 and the number of days lost reached a hundred at the C3 plant and 50 at the other one in 1980. Consumption of Blanquefort transmissions by US plants had been cut because of the recession and a decline in sales.

	1979	1980
Production off C3 gearbox	479,268	248,873
Production of gearbox and front-axle	456,988	417,567
Employment	3,923	3,629
Exports (millions francs)	1,397	1,145

The business of the Blanquefort site was at stake. While touring Ford of Europe locations, Henry Ford II had met Chaban-Delmas in October 1980 and promised to protect the Gironde plants. But a fight against the clock was waged because Ford set up competition between the Bordeaux plants and a US plant in Sharonville, which also manufactured automatic transmissions, over which would produce a new automatic gearbox for light commercial cars and the American range. The closure of the Gironde C3 plant, which was pondered at the time¹¹, would have tarnished Ford's brand name in France: "The company's image would suffer substantially on a national basis with consequent effects upon sales" because Ford would appear as "the ugly American"¹² – and the company anticipated the risk of a lengthy occupation of the sites by trade-unions. Ford of Europe and Ford France tried to obtain State support to enhance the competitiveness of the Gironde plants: on 27 March 1981, they sent a letter asking for FRF 70 millions subsidies. The executive in charge of public relations, Roland Especel, met Chaban-Delmas – still mayor of Bordeaux and then also president of Parliament – to get his help, and organised a meeting of Chaban-Delmas with Robert Lutz, the chairman of Ford of Europe, at the beginning of June. Philip Caldwell, the chairman of Ford US, met R. Lutz in London on 23 June 1981. Meanwhile the left had won the presidential and Parliamentary elections, which raised some doubts in the USA about the very fate of capitalism in France.

The left struggled anyway against the unemployment crisis and their concerns matched those of Ford. National and local authorities were concerned about the fate of the site – especially since Ford had recently closed down its Amsterdam factory. The transatlantic slump could have condemned the plant if the company had not repositioned it within its worldwide productive system. Finance minister Jacques Delors and his advisors met Ford executives on 18 August 1981 and intense negotiations were then conducted with Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy's cabinet and above all J. Delors' staff and DATAR (in charge of subsidies). Following a second interview with J. Delors on 6 October 1981, conclusions were summarized in a letter sent by R. Lutz to the government on 9 October 1981, which defined the details of the agreement. The government accepted those terms.

Ford decided to renew momentum for both plants thanks to a large plan of investments. It allocated four new products to the plants – either components for gearboxes, or new transmissions. But Ford had requested state financial help and the government was convinced to prop up the move. Government "industrial policy" – to develop key manufacturing sites in the regions and to favour investments in new equipment and innovation – converged with social policy. Ford pledged to recruit several hundred employees at Blanquefort, following many voluntary departures and early

retirements (amounting to one quarter of the overall work-force) or short-time unemployment measures. The firm received financial subsidies of some FRF 195 millions – either to finance equipment or to alleviate social costs for new hires –, as part of total expenses estimated at FRF 1,100 millions. In fact, on 31 March 1985, the plants still employed only 3,050 employees (of which 2,850 were full time). But the core investment programs had been completed (at a cost of \$191 millions, against a projected 181 millions) and a mere FRF 171 millions loan had been used (against FRF 750 millions scheduled) since the company self-financed most of the programs. Uncertainty around the fate of both plants was removed and their insertion within Ford's international system confirmed. The State recognized that key reality in March 1985 through its pledge to deliver its subsidies if Ford guaranteed to maintain 2,900 staff on the site.

Ford commitments in the 1981 agreement:

- Investments would allow the plant to manufacture the A4LD transmission for Europe and 5 gear-boxes and front-axes; a A4LD program for the US market would be established.
- Overall, five parallel investment programs would reinforce the plant for an amount of FRF 1,089 millions.
- The level of employment would increase by 1,450 units between 1st April 1982 and 31 March 1985 and would rise to 3,600 since 30 March 1985 and be maintained for a minimum duration up to 31 March 1987.

State assistance:

- Subsidies to finance downdays, early retirements and voluntary departures
- Low interest loans (up to FRF 762 millions).
- Grants based on regional economic development (about 11% of the overall investment; FRF 50,5 millions or FRF 34,837 for each recruit).
- A five years tax exemption for investments and recruitment linked to new activities.

Conclusion

This story is not yet a full business history: for that, archives have to be opened to determine the real challenges faced by the Bordeaux area, the FMC and the state, and to reconstitute the negotiations with the authorities about industrial projects. Secondly, the reflection of political scientists should be used to help evaluate Ford's ability to adapt to the specific French administrative and political way of life (networking, lobbying, winning subsidies, etc.). Thirdly, factors determining the creation and evolution of such a site within the industrial strategy of a transnational company need to be more fully assessed. Moreover, such a historical chapter would also have to be supplemented by an approach based on the economics of labour and industry.

NOTES

1. In 1966, Ford imported to France 35,000 cars from Germany, 9,000 from Great Britain and 700 *Mustang*. This progress in sales was due to the reduced level of tariffs owing to the establishment of Common Market (favouring thus German exports to France) and to the development of a retail network.

2. This chapter draws on a fourth-level graduate student's dissertation: Emmanuelle Daviaud, *Ford: un industriel aquitain*, Bordeaux, Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux 3 University, 1990 (under H. Bonin's direction). She had been welcomed as a trainee at Ford plant by Roland Especel, Ms Lafourcade and Ms Abadie. We also used documents kept at the Association for *La Mémoire de Bordeaux & de la Communauté urbaine de Bordeaux*; documents provided by Ford's public relations department at Saint-Germain-en-Laye headquarters during recherche in 2003 and by Roland Especel; and personal documents. Roland Especel and Steven Tolliday had provided helpful support in preparing this text.

3. Cf. further the chapter by Yannick Lung.

4. "The Prime Minister raised the question as to the choice of Sarrelouis. M. Ford replied that our studies indicated a considerable freight penalty (both input and outflow approximately 7,000,000 \$) had we chosen a site in France instead of Sarrelouis. He pointed out that these studies were based upon published freight rates in France; and that we had not attempted, at that time, to negotiate different rates. M. Ford also referred to the confusion which existed in the minds of American businessmen with regard to the kind of reception they might get in France if they were to propose an investment. M. Ford alluded to the current differences between American and French policy, and the effect that these differences do have on investment decisions by American private enterprise. The Prime Minister answered that, whatever political differences may exist, these should in no way hinder the normal development of commercial and business relations between the two countries. He pointed out that the French Government would be extremely favourable to any Ford investment in France, as they had been in the case of General Electric and, most recently, of Motorola. He suggested that it was neither fair nor economically justifiable within the context of the Common market, for American business to build plants on the periphery of France with the object of selling the finished product within the French market. He indicated that, since France was a major part of the Common Market, it should also be a major locus for American investment. When it was pointed out that Ford Motor Company was using to a greater and greater extent French suppliers for its German and Belgian plants, the Prime Minister answered by saying that this was only a partial solution; that French interest also required the finished product to be manufactured or assembled in France [...]. M. Ford evidenced great interest in the current point of view of the French government as expressed by the Prime Minister, and replied that, in the context of future investments of Ford Motor Company in Europe, the Company would very seriously consider France as a possible site. M. Ford pointed out however that any such decision was several years away in view of the investments already underway in other Common Market countries." Report on an interview between Henry Ford II and Georges Pompidou, Memo of discussion, 13 June 1966, private archives of Ford France [we owe Roland Especel to get access to these records]. When several French executives asked why Ford didn't consider Alsace, for instance, instead of Saar, the company told them that Alsace and especially its southern part were considered as areas dedicated to Peugeot's influence – and that latter opened a new car in Mulhouse with several thousands employees.

5. Jean Dumas, *Les activités industrielles dans la Communauté urbaine de Bordeaux*, Bordeaux, geography thesis, 1980. Joseph Lajugie, *L'Aquitaine, 25 ans d'évolution économique et sociale, 1950-1975*, Bordeaux, IERSO & Bière publishings, 1977. Pierre Delfaud & Claude Lacour, *L'Aquitaine face à la crise*, Bordeaux, IERSO & Bière publishings, 1976. H. Bonin (ed), *50 ans d'Aquitaine, 1945-1995*, Bordeaux, L'Horizon chimérique publishings, 1995.

6. They recommended that "Ford France establish an automatic transmission facility in France requiring total expenditures, net of negotiated grants related to facilities of \$8 million, of \$92 millions (\$61 million, net of negotiated grants, for facilities; \$16 millions for tooling) and that the Company make an equity investment of up to \$30 million in Ford France". Report of proceedings, North American product planning committee, 8 December 1970, Ford private archives in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

7. Ford private archives in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

8. Henri Amouroux & Pierre Sainderichain, *La bataille de Bordeaux*, Paris, Fayard, 1970. Both authors were then chief editors of the Bordeaux daily newspaper *Sud Ouest*.

9. A bid was gained by the *Société nationale de travaux publics*, which assumed that task.

10. Turnover was high :

Turnover among non-monthly labourer at Blanquefort plants (handwritten note at Ford France)	1978	1979	1980
Spontaneous departures from the plants (%)	14.2	9.2	8.2
Redundancies	0.7	0.7	0.6
Total	14.9	9.9	8.9

11. A handwritten note (1980, 20 May) reported a meeting where the closure of the C3 plant could be planned for 1987.

12. Internal note at Ford France, 1980, 2 July.