
FORD MOTOR COMPANY IN ROMANIA[§]

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MOTTO: *“Today [i.e.1930] life is changing. Under the influence of Americanisme, Europe is searching for a new social form. Under the heat of American civilization, superficial and dull but very well organized, the European soul is transforming. What will it be its fate/form is not yet to be foreseen? [...]”*¹.

Abstract

Ford Motor Company in Romania studies the history of Ford Motor Company in Romania from its beginning in early twentieth century to nowadays. Ford Motor Company transformed Romanians' perception about the United States. Royal Garage imported Ford cars as early as 1911. Despite several attempts, Ford Motor Company made its entrance on Romanian market only in 1931. On May 15, 1936 the assembly plant opened. As elsewhere in Europe, Ford Motor Company is representative for American consumerism. It redefined industrial labor relations, production techniques, and it offered an alternative model in Romania. Based on archival studies in Romania and the United States, this essay explains, through the example of Ford Motor Company in Romania, how consumerism of American manufactured goods became important in interwar Romania and contributed to the creation of new cultural practices linked to modernization.

Key words: Ford Motor Company, Ford Romania, fordism, consumerism, americanization.

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¹ Octav ulu iu, *Jurnal*, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1975, p. 147.

Beside Woodrow Wilson, Henry Ford and Ford Motor Company transformed Romanians' perception about the United States. As elsewhere in Europe, Ford and Fordism were very much part of the Romanian public debate. The Romanian translation of Henry Ford's autobiography *My Life and Work* was an instant success. In 1935, one year later from its publication, the magazine *Motor* republished *My Life and Work* in its pages. Even Vintil Brătianu, perceived as anti-American by Americans, spoke with enthusiasm about Henry Ford's book *My Life and Work*, while he ordered 50 copies to share with his subordinates². Numerous conferences about Henry Ford and Fordism took place in interwar Romania: for example, in January 1931 Ion Eftimiu sustained a conference about Fordism and its successes in Bucharest, in 1936 Dr. Gheorghe Brătianu, the director of Romanian National Bank - Galați sustained a conference about Henry Ford's life and work in Galați. Romanians believed that Ford and Fordism was the embodiment of "America", that "it represented something quintessentially American"³. Furthermore, they considered four factors as essential for Ford's success: mass production; rationalization, which resulted in less manpower, higher salaries, and a production of better and cheaper cars; significant decrease in Ford cars' retail price yearly; and the policy of consistently reinvesting profits in the company"⁴.

This article aims to provide an overview of Ford Motor Company's history in Romania. At the same time, it considers this study case as representative for understanding American consumerism. Cars remained one of the most if not the most important American product imported in Romania. For instance, automotive vehicles and parts ranked first in Romanian imports from the United States in 1932, 1937, and 1938. Figure 1 demonstrates this domination. It shows the number of cars on the Romanian market as well the number of American cars and their percentage.

² I.G. Duca, *Cronica unui român în veacul XX*, vol. I., Editura Ion-Dumitru Verlag, München, 1985, p. 173.

³ Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity. American Business and the Modernization of Germany*, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 31.

⁴ Victor Rodan. *Eroii muncii. Taylor-Ford-Bat'a-Edison Nobel*, Editura Ministerului Muncii, Cooperărilor și Asigurărilor sociale, Măntăuș, 1930, p. 42.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY IN ROMANIA

	American cars	Percentage	Total number of cars in Romania
1925	3,974	33.89%	11,725
1926	7,825	49.23%	15,895
1927	12,716	58.25%	21,832
1928	19,730	62.71%	31,365
1929	26,836	70.79%	37,901
1930	27,343	70.47%	38,814
1931	26,623	72.12%	36,953
1932	24,274	72.30%	33,904
1933	24,277	72.32%	33,586

Cars in Romania (1925-1933)⁵

Country	Population	One automobile for:
Romania	19,000,000	796 inhabitants
United States	126,000,000	5
England	47,000,000	23
Sweden	6,000,000	41
Switzerland	4,000,000	46
France	42,000,000	22
Holland	8,000,000	57
Belgium	8,000,000	51
Germany	67,000,000	68
Czechoslovakia	15,000,000	126
Italy	41,000,000	109

The ratio car to inhabitants during interwar period⁶

Figure 1 sketches the ratio car to inhabitants in Romania compared with several other countries. This chart also confirms the limitations of American consumption in interwar Romania. Despite the cars undoubted' appeal, the desires, and dreams embodied in cars' advertising or American goods in general, the buying power or the lack of it intervened. Owing a car came meant acquiring status, it was a symbol

⁵ *Anuarul Statistic al României 1934*, Tipografia Cur ii Regale F. Göbl Fii, Bucure ti, 1935.

⁶ *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, 1910-1940*, Reel 34, 871.631/125, June 25, 1936. Other American sources point out that Romania had in 1926 the most cars in South Eastern Europe (16,300), followed by Turkey with 11,222.

of social status. It defined the identity of the upper and middle class, marked their position in the society. Yet an American car was not for everybody. It came with other important costs: numerous taxes as well as high maintenance costs. In Romania all privately-owned automobiles not plying for hire had to pay 3,000 lei/year (\$18,75) for automotive vehicles weighting up to 1,000 kg, 5000 lei (\$31.25) for those weighing from 1,000 to 1,200 Kg, and 10,000 lei (\$62.50) for vehicles weighing more than 1,500 kg (exception, plying for hire, trucks, and tank cars). License and turnover taxes added to the tax burden. Gas prices and spare parts were rather expensive. For instance, Cella Delavrancea noted that the reparations for her Lincoln, flat tire and horn cost 3,900 lei, a full tank and high speed liquid another 1,000 lei⁷. To take another example, I. Vasiliu bought spare parts for his Chevrolet worth 7,500 lei⁸. Therefore, the main buyers were upper and middle class. According to Romanian sales statistics, 75% of car sales were on credit - out of those only 15% sales did not require registration⁹ - and only 25% with payment at delivery¹⁰. Even Ford's manager, E. Wachner admitted that "cars' quality is satisfactory, but the prices are higher, sometimes exaggerated"¹¹. Nonetheless, it seems plausible that the lower middle class, taxi drivers, and wealthy peasants could have access to American cars through the used car market and through monthly installments. Beside regular sales, there was also a market for used goods. "Used items could offer an indirect entry to consumer culture, stretch a tight budget to supply comforts otherwise not available, provide both investment and use value, and enhance wage-earning possibilities"¹². Although primary sources are limited, there are several images, newspapers page of classifieds, and advertising to suggest its existence and widespread use. To take an example, in November 1929 Tr. Macedon bought a used car - a Chevrolet from Noel S.A.R. for 70,000 lei, which represented less than one third of a new car's price¹³. Taxi drivers were also main buyers for used cars, "taxis remain the best market for American cars - powerful, faster, and capable of higher average speed"¹⁴.

⁷ Cella Delavrancea. *Scrisori c tre Filip Lahovary*, Editura Jurnalul Literar, Bucure ti, 1998, p. 147.

⁸ A.M.B., *Noel S.A.R.*, dosar. 16/1928, December 30, 1929, f. 5.

⁹ During the interwar period, the Romanian state required the registration of sales on credit in a special registry book opened with a high court. The registration was mandatory if the individuals would not show enough proof of stable or sufficient income.

¹⁰ From the Collections Ford Motor Co. Archives - Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearbon (MI), Acc. 1790, Box 24.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Susan Porter Benson, *What Goes 'Round Comes 'Round. Secondhand Clothing, Furniture, and Tools in Working-Class Lives in the Interwar United States* in "Journal of Women's History", vol. 19 (no. 1, Spring 2007), p. 17.

¹³ A.M.B., *Noel S.A.R.*, dosar. 16/1928, November 12, 1929, f. 10.

¹⁴ From the Collections Ford Motor Co. Archives - Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearbon (MI), Acc. 1790, Box 24.

Romanians considered Ford the most representative car and sales confirmed that. For example, in the first six months of 1935, Ford sold 449 cars out of a total 1,286 cars sold in Romania. In 1937, Ford sold 562 vehicles compared to Plymouth's 140, Opel's 175, and Mercedes' 99¹⁵. These figures were not unique during the interwar period. Ford started to symbolize modernity in Romania. Whereas American cars gained ascendancy, European cars started to loose terrain. C. Toescu recalled: "In a matter of years, the whiskered Ford replaced Renault. Their name came from two tousled levers located next to the steering wheel"¹⁶ or under a newspaper's catchy line: "Victorious Americans, French imports assassinated"¹⁷.

The Beginnings

Royal Garage imported Ford cars as early as May 1911. Shortly, other agencies such as Colin & Co., Leonida & Co., Noel S.A.R, and Raf S.A.R. expanded the market. Numerous political figures owned Ford cars. Among them was Ion I. C. Br tianu, whose daughter used to call her car *Fordu a*. Ford cars were an instant success story, thus between May 1911 and November 1912, Royal Garage already sold 106 Ford cars (Annex 1).

On December 8, 1920, Collin & Co. requested on behalf of the Ford Motor Company the permission to build an assembly plant in Romania:

"Honorable Minister,

My name is I. C. Colin and I represent the world's largest car factory, Ford and Fordson, in Romania. At the request of the president of Ford Motor Company's European division, who is presently in Romania,

I have the honor to submit for approval the following:

Ford Motor Company, interested in contributing to the development of our country's industry and economy, and despite the requests of collaboration from other countries such as Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, has decided to build in Romania, at Constan a, a large assembly plant, capable of producing, at the beginning, 25-50 cars a day. The cars produced there will supply the markets from Romania and the Orient.

You can easily understand the advantages of having this type of industrial facility in our country because Ford Motor Company will provide tools, equipment, and materials. These tools are the latest generation, the expression of modernity, admired by the entire world because of their capacity of production as well as their incomparable precision.

Using these installations, Ford Motor Company, which employs 100,000 people, has reached the extraordinary performance of producing 4,000 ready-to-

¹⁵ Statistics from *Motor*, 1935-1937.

¹⁶ Cri an Toescu, *C l tor prin secolul XX. Memorii*, Editura Albatros, Bucure ti, 2001, p. 47.

¹⁷ „Motor”, June 27, 1935, p. 3.

drive cars a day. During the war, besides shells, cannons, Liberty engines for aviation, and other war materials, this formidable factory also produced one ship a day for defending and attacking submarines.

Ford Motor Company will also send engineers to train personnel, whose number will increase at the same rate with productivity. The company will recruit the majority of personnel from Romania, thus creating a priceless advantage for us by increasing the number of both agricultural and industrial mechanics.

The company will build or buy a metallurgical plant in Constan a, which will be (if is not already) connected to the harbor, with a garage line, and it will be re-organized according to its new purpose as a private warehouse (so to say). There we will store tools, machines, parts sent by Ford Motor Company, without paying the import taxes.

The company will pay all legal taxes up to date for the materials and they will be used exclusively for our country's needs. You will have the liberty to designate the personnel to conduct this entire operation. Ford Motor Company will support all of the expenses incurred.

Ford Motor Company reserves the right to send the final products to the designated neighboring countries, without any restrictions from our authorities.

Taking into account the praiseworthy intentions of Ford Motor Company, Minister Br tianu please take into consideration the above mentioned proposal.

Yours truly,
Al. I. C. Colin¹⁸.

Unfortunately, Vintil Br tianu, "notoriously anti-American"¹⁹, rejected the proposal to the regret of the people directly involved as well as the public opinion. Felix Aderca remarked: "What a pity! Even though we might have not needed so many cars, we would have learned a lot from Ford's spirit of economy and strict organization. Russians understood that better - they, who were as weakling as we were - and, today, over the Nizhni-Novgorod skies flutters the flag of smoke from a Ford blast furnace"²⁰.

In October 1927, William G. Collins (in the future, assistant manager in Alexandria, Egypt) renewed the proposal for establishing an assembly plant in Constan a. Ford Motor Company wanted to build the assembly plant on a plot of 6,000 square meters. The company proposed a 15-year lease, starting with January 1, 1928. Romanian Government had a counter-proposal. Furthermore, in July 1928, E. G. Liebold, Henry Ford's general secretary, formulated the counter-proposal in a letter addressed to Andrei. Popovici, the Secretary of the Romanian Legation in Washington D.C.:

¹⁸ A.N.I.C., fond *Ministerul Industriei i Comer ului, Direc ia General a V milor*, rola 554, c. 333-334.

¹⁹ *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, 1910-1940*, rola 35, 871.71/7, March 30, 1930.

²⁰ Felix Aderca, *Oameni excep ionali*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 125.

“Sometime ago our representative endeavored to secure a site for an assembly plant in Romania, but found that the only land available at a sea port was owned by the Romanian Government. The Government, wanted to lease the site for ten years; Ford Motor Company was to construct a building and the factory would revert to the Government at the expiration of the lease, which in turn would rent it to us. This was unsatisfactory. We have been also considering serving this territory from Constantinople; however the introduction of the new model A has caused us to reconsider these plans with regard to distribution. We find that Romania presents the possibility of a very good market, which will be increased as the construction of good roads advances. There is a possibility of establishing a service branch somewhere in Romania”²¹.

Yet, they received another negative answer. Perhaps meant as a consolation, Popovici, on behalf of the Government, awarded Henry Ford a medal of the Romanian Royal House, in recognition of his contribution as “benefactor of humanity ... for the development of industry, social and international relationships”²².

Ford Motor Company of Romania

In 1931, Ford Motor Company opened a subsidiary in Bucharest. On November 17, 1931, Ford Romania published its charter and bylaws in “Monitorul Oficial”. According to its charter, the Company’s main role was “the commerce and the industry of any kind and means of wheeled transportation, as well as any kind of object, directly or indirectly connected with these means of transportation. The company is capable of performing, without restriction, any kind of financial, commercial, industrial business on its own accord, or in a joint venture with other legal or physical entities”²³.

The capital of Ford Motor Company of Romania was lei 5 million, representing 5,000 shares of lei 1,000 each. The main shareholders were: Sacha Roman, lei 2,000,000; T. Davila, lei 1,000,000; Redlich, lei 500,000; M. Lereanu, lei 500,000; M. Manolovici, lei 400,000; George Neni or, lei 300,000; and Al. Zaharia, lei 300,000. Sir Percival Perry, Edsel B. Ford, Sir John T. Davies, F. S. Thornhill Cooper, Sacha Roman, and T. Davilla represented the board of directors. Percival Perry became the chairman of the board and president, and John T. Davies the vice president.

The board met for the first two meetings in London on December 9th and 10th, 1931. They decided that the business activities of the Romanian company would start on January 1, 1932. The new manager was E. R. Wachner.

²¹ A.M.A.E., *Lega ia Român* - Washington D.C., vol. 140.

²² <http://www.retromobil.ro>.

²³ „Monitorul Oficial”, 17 noiembrie, 1931, p. 13675.

On January 15, 1932, in the daily newspaper "Universul" announced the event. A Ford representative stated "Today we open our new distribution center and repair section. At 17.30 (5:30 p.m.) we will inaugurate on Grigore Alexandrescu Street, No. 59, our new distribution center for Ford cars assembled in Romania, and the repair and maintenance division for Lincoln, Ford, and Fordson of S.A.R. Ford Romania. The purpose of this Company is to fulfill our wish and our customer's wish to benefitiate of high standard maintenance for their cars. Ford Motor Company has always followed the principle that selling the car does not end the transaction between the Company and the client, yet it establishes the obligation to further please the customer. We want to insure minimal expense on the client's part, just as much as the client is interested in the quality of the vehicle. Thus, we created a well-supervised service division, destined to provide cheap and competent maintenance for the cars we will sell²⁴. Vasilescu-Carpen, I. Mititilineu, ing. Edgar Mendel, Dorel Davilla, Walsh, Sendre, Barbu Neam u, and the priest Vintilescu were among the participants. Vintilescu was present at the opening, presumably to bless the enterprise. D. Walsh spoke about Henry Ford's interest in the Romanian market. D. C. Dem. Popescu praised Ford products on behalf of the customers²⁵. The inauguration ended with a rich buffet, but dry, lacking alcoholic beverages, just as in America²⁶.

Ford Motor Company made its entrance on the Romanian market through a spectacular campaign, which included a huge caravan reaching the most important cities. Starting on June 15, 1931, the caravan traveled about 5,000 kilometers for 79 days. The trip demonstrated Ford cars' durability and their ability to adapt to the Romanian market. When the cars reached Bucharest, they became part of a permanent showroom in Pia a Roman .

Ford Motor Company was successful in Romania. In 1933, Ford Romania's authorized capital increased to lei 20 million, in July 1935 to lei 30 million, in January 1936 to lei 75 million, to lei 90 million on December 30, 1937. On February 28, 1942, the capital doubled reaching lei 180 million. The local branch started by importing 1,000 cars, yet the imports dropped to 90 per year because Romanian state's restrictions. Moreover, Romanian branch was also responsible for sales in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

According to Henry Ford's economic policy, the next step was to create an assembly line in Romania On March 1, 1935; Ford Romania addressed a request for building a new plant on Calea Floreasca to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. On September 26, 1934, Ford Romania bought from Imobiliara Chrissoveloni 7,535 square meters, at the price of lei 2,335,850 (the price for one square meter

²⁴ „Universul”, 15 ianuarie 1932, p. 3.

²⁵ „Universul”, 16 ianuarie 1932, p. 7.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

was lei 310)²⁷. Furthermore, Ford Romania intended to receive the advantages granted by the law encouraging the national industry, to sign a treaty for a period of ten years, and to import 2,500 units per year, and the ability to increase this number if the demand would be higher. Lastly, the company requested to be taxed on parts rather than built-up units. The Journal Nr.186 of the Minister Council dated February 4, 1935, granted Ford's request:

“Considering the utility of an assembly plant in our country;

Considering Ford Motor Company of Romania's offer, registered at No. 117395 from 1935, we decided:

Art. I. Ford Motor Company of Romania's offer is approved; we granted the following provisions for the assembly plant, which would be built in Bucharest, Floreasca Avenue, during the year 1935:

1. We granted, the privileges set forth in the law encouraging the national industry, for the assembly plant from Floreasca Avenue, provided the company would fulfill the formalities required by this law.

2. We granted to the company the above mentioned for ten years:

a) A yearly import of 2,500 units of machine parts, which would be assembled in the aforementioned assembly plant; their value should not exceed lei 150 million, regardless their country of origin.

The import of parts for cars and trucks has to be made in groups of at least one hundred units at once, chassis with stringers and crossbar detached, and the body with unpainted panels.

b) The right of unlimited import of spare parts, found in the general catalogue of Ford, with payment of customs duties.

3. The payment for imported parts, tools, and equipment, should be made through clearing, ceding the usual share of foreign currency to the Romanian National Bank.

4. In applying the Customs Article 1293, the base of tax calculation will be the real value of imported parts, which will be assembled as cars, not the value of the built-up units. This value would be established based on the receipts presented by the company and certified by the Commerce Chamber and the Romanian commercial attaché or the Romanian Consulate.

5. The Government would submit for parliamentary approval the bill for establishing similar tax advantages for trucks' imported parts and the chassis as well as for built-up cars.

6. The import taxes, which would be paid for the goods exported by this assembly plant, would make up the difference.

7. The cars assembled there would be labeled as made in Romania.

²⁷ A.M.B., fond *Banca Chrissoveloni*, dosar 12/1932, f. 9.

8. The Romanian Government commits itself to grant the company any further concessions that it would provide to other similar assembly plants under the duty of the company to comply with the new requirements imposed on these assembly plants [...]"²⁸.

On May 6, 1936, the Government reduced the privileges granted to Ford, thus the number of imported units dropped to 100; the names of the parts were individually identified, such as paint, valve oil. On August 29, 1936, the Government further amended Journal No. 186: "Ford Motor Company of Romania is not authorized to export oil products²⁹; and pertaining to custom, as the number of cars made in our country increased, the imported parts would be taxed as built-up units"³⁰. During the interwar years, Romanian newspapers also talked about Ford Romania's intention to build another assembly plant or a factory for tires and other rubber products in Gala i. Indeed, Ford Romania invested in Banloc plant, which produced rubber goods.

Romanians perceived the opening of the assembly plant as an important step for industrialization and modernization in Romania. They perceived Fordism, the American model in general, as representing efficiency, rationalization, and standardization. During the interwar period, there was a certain fascination with *Americanisme*, as Romanians named products and habits connected one way or another with the United States. Yet, there were voices within Romanian society, which saw the United States, American goods and way of life as incompatible with "Romanian values", the "Romanian soul and spirit", and the "national tradition".

The reception of Fordism and Ford Romania was no exception within this kind of debates. From the beginning, the assembly plant aroused interest, but also resistance. On January 29, 1935, in the session of the Assembly of Deputies, Vasile Serdici pointed out the budgetary sacrifices made by the Romanian Government. Further, he commented on the "negative" impact that the assembly plant would have had on Romanian industry. Moreover, the factory was only an assembly plant because the parts would be imported from outside the country³¹.

Architecture: Working Space and Facilities

„Instead of a swamp, which spread illness and death through the wretched inhabitants of the Floreasca ditch, Ford Motor Company of Romania built a true palace, made only of concrete and glass. It is the most imposing, modern, and luxurious of similar buildings and, unquestionably, one of the important monuments

²⁸ A.N.I.C., fond *Ministerul Industriei i Comer ului. Direc ia Secretariat*, rola 1769, c. 517.

²⁹ „Monitorul Oficial”, 5 septembrie 1936, p. 7437.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ A.N.I.C., fond *Pre edin ia Adun rii Deputa ilor*, dosar 2/1935, f. 71.

of our capital”³². In 2000, law number 5 declared the building historical monument of exceptional value.

P. Em. Miclescu’s memoirs recalled his career as the architect of Ford Romania. Miclescu, a closed friend of engineer Lucian Greceanu - who, at his turn, was E. Wachner’s bridge partner, received the proposal to sketch a project for the board of directors. P. Em. Miclescu and his colleague, Ioana Golescu designed the building:

„The city hall approved the project - including, along with the industrial hall, an entire complex of administrative and socio - cultural buildings - on the spot. The location, nearby the new residential area of Floreasca, was separated by the ditch [...]. I proposed to cut off the earthen billow which separated the ditch and the lake because the bottom of the ditch was the same with the bottom of the pleasure lake. In addition, the supply with water from Colentina river was in progress. This would have connected them and made the ditch a kind of lake’s *fiord* (between the industrial complex and neighbour residential district).

Overall, the project approved in Dagenham, stipulated the construction of a big industrial building situated parallel to the hill, with a simple and austere architecture of face brick and stone, a classical structure of steel - edifices which I dreamed to see high in the sky like Acropole monuments. At the north end, unlike the horizontal feature, I wanted to build an immobile tower with administrative offices, multi-stage on 20 levels. Finally, the socio-cultural buildings, shaded by plantations (I contacted the landscape architect Rebhun in order to accomplish this), were supposed to multi-stage sloping until the lake border, where there were the buildings of the nautical club and the swimming pool. The nautical club and the swimming pool - with an autochthonous rustic architecture and some feature typical to Frank Llyod Wright, made the transition between the architecture of the industrial complex and the residential district, situated in the reverse border of the *fiord*. Ford Motor Company of Romania contracted the fulfillment of the urban equipment with the engineer Tiberiu Eremia. [...] I was informed that the industrial building must be reduced at two thirds and to stop the study of the other constructions from the initial planning. What happened? Nothing special Ford Motor Company decided to build a new factory in a different country!”³³.

On April 11, 1935 D. Greceanu and P. Em. Miclescu’s proposal for the assembly plant building, registered under the number 006224 at the City Hall, had received the permission to start the construction of an assembly line, after paying the afferent taxes: 2,575 lei for 583 square meters tax for construction, 18,950 for 3,790 square meters for 1 level building, and 34,250 for 3,430 square meters for 2

³² „Motor”, 15 ianuarie 1936, p. 10.

³³ Paul Emil Miclescu. *Noi povestiri desuete*, Editura Vremea, Bucure ti, 1999, p. 81-83.

levels building³⁴. The next three images show the building plans for the assembly plant.

On May 15, 1936, the assembly plant situated in Bd. V. Craiu (Calea Floreasca) opened. The capacity of this assembly plant was 2,500 cars per year and different reparations at 6,000 cars yearly, the power, the rough material and the employees: „250 workers, from whom five foreign foremen, five technicians and a Romanian draughts-man. The technical manger was a Romanian engineer (L. D. Greceanu). The administrative management was to be held by a general manager, Austrian citizen, helped by five managers, four Romanian citizens and a Swiss one, who are helped at the office by twelve bookkeepers and twenty-six administrative clerks, five of them foreign citizens”³⁵. „The value of the land was lei 5,550,000, the buildings lei 30,000,000 and the equipment and cars lei 15,000,000 lei”³⁶.

Floreasca plants, inspired by Ford’s Highland Park designed by Albert Kahn, refashion the work space. Floreasca plant, with its reinforced concrete structure, symbolized a new modern automobile factory. „The assembly plant was organized in departments to facilitate the activity. First, they unloaded the parts from the United States in the yard with a rolling cart. Then, the parts were sent to the appropriate department. At the ground floor there was the main department one for bodies and one for chassis. Another department was the dye works - an airtight room. The enameled body stepped out at upholstery department, and then the frame was lowered and mounted on the chassis, followed by more work until the car was ready. Next stop was the store”³⁷. In the assembly plant there was also a department for selling spare parts. The last but not the least were the offices, eulogistically described in the press: „The offices are a model of hygiene and organization: lots of light, constant ventilation, space between drawing boards, spacious wardrobe areas, - everything according to the latest hygiene standards. I especially liked that nobody smokes, not even in the plant where the workers are active”³⁸. Ford plant’s capacity was ten cars a day, but increased up to forty cars a day. The storage capacity was of 200-300 unassembled vehicles.

The number of employees increased from 5 in 1931 to 280 in 1936, 607 in 1942; the number continuously decreased during and after the war to 376 in 1946. Workers were mainly Romanians, yet at the executive level (in ten years nationalization was planned); the English branch maintained the control. The work schedule was eight hours per day, five days a week, Saturday and Sunday off. The wages were 45 lei per hour, while workers at other plants received the same sum

³⁴ A. P.M.B., *Serviciul Technic*, dosar 710/1935.

³⁵ A.N.I.C., *Ministerul Industriei si Comertului. Directia Industrie*, dosar 12/1935, f. 89.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ „Patria”, 1 decembrie 1936, p. 59.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

for a workday (10 hours)³⁹. According to the press, the income of a worker at Ford Motor Company of Romania was comparable to the salary of a bank director in a provincial city⁴⁰. Yet, in company's files the salaries ranged from 14 to 100 per hour for white collar workers⁴¹.

At the same time the workers and working conditions were very important: „Strong and healthy workers with clean olive robes. For example, what a big difference there is between any other service department in the country where the mechanics have dirty clothes and faces, they seem tired, whereas in Ford's service departments everything seems to be easier and mechanical systems replaced manual labor”⁴². Ford company also trained its employees. For example the technical director - engineer Dumitru Greceanu –participated in training session at Ford plants in Europe such as London, Anvers, Cologne, etc., the sales director N. Ruleta at Ford plant in Alexandria. They also organized courses for fitters and mechanics awarding degrees for department head, chief fitter, and fitter.

As mentioned before, Ford Romania tried to emulate workers' lifestyle in the United States. Ford Romania offered, among other benefits, the plant's cantina, with lunches served for 15 lei. Not only working activities preoccupied the company, but also workmen's socialization and leisure time: the marina (nautical club) with the Ford chalet on the Floreasca Lake and boats; the sports club with the soccer team, and the factory's choir. Ford workers participated in various radio broadcastings. In addition, they also organized fairs. Vasile Hurdugagi⁴³, a former employee at Ford, recalled the discipline and children's orange uniforms. Of course, he also narrated the work schedule (7 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.) and the wages - he did not remember what was the exact amount, but he was sure that they received it in an envelope. Regarding the social activities, he pointed out trips organized for the workers and the swimming pool behind the factory as an important place to socialize.

The Ford Company had a distribution network throughout the country, incorporating companies such as *Saral* and *Leonida* in Bucharest, *I.M.A.S.A.* in Arad, and *Perry Poru iu* in Cluj. These factories shared similar benefits as Floreasca assembly plant (Annex 2). They maintained liasons through conferences and Club Merit - an award for the garage which had the highest rate of sales in a year.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ A.M.B., fond *Oficiul Central al Registrului Comer ului*, dosar 278/1925.

⁴² „Patria”, 1 decembrie 1936, p. 59.

⁴³ On January, 26 2005 I had an interview with Mr. Hurdugagi. He is now retired. He was born in 1931 and worked at Ford Motor Company of Romania as a courier.

Advertising the American Dream?

Car's advertising was particularly rich in Romanian newspapers. Most of the ads targeted families, fashionable elites, industrialists, and farmers. They emphasized speed, modernity, progress, comfort, but also savings in gas consumption, prices through regular sales, and their look. Ads flaunted superlatives such as "the best ever made", "the safety it brought", "supremacy on the market" of a model or another, or "the value is bigger than the price." They contributed to the diffusion of American goods as well as the American lifestyle. Newspapers such as "Universul" sold 130,000 copies daily, "Timpul" 80,000, "Semnalul" 40-50,000 copies, "Curierul" 10-15,000, "Dreptatea" 4-8,000 daily. Most of the newspapers had at least 3-4 pages with advertising.

The main means Ford advertised were through permanent ads in the newspapers and big posters, *The Ford Bulletin* and *Ford Magazine*, "Ford Page" - a permanent page in the magazine "Motor", posters of 33-38 cm priced at 30 lei per hundred, and showrooms. Launching a contest for the best photography taken by Ford owners was also an important way to stimulate further the consumption of Ford cars and other Ford products. Among the prizes was a Ford radio or radiator.

Advertising stressed modernity, efficiency, material progress, power and safety, durability, speed and performance, elegance, but also thrift and the superiority of the American cars. Most of the advertising presented social scenes, dominated by a bourgeois model (cleanliness, order, thrift), social values that often targeted the women. Furthermore, they accentuated necessity, savings, low prices and installments, comfort and luxury. Besides mechanical discourse, most ads focused on their market (elites, industrialists and businessmen, farmers). Most of the ads included richly dressed bystanders (single men, families, single women, or women with their children). These social representations were representative for a narrow part of Romanian society. Women became one of the main interlocutors of the advertising. For instance, one ad reads "the lady prefers a Ford car because of its grace and safety".

Taking into account the categories it addressed, the advertising suggests several types of car cultures in Romania: luxury cars, middle class - sedan cars, sports cars, and trucks. As previously mentioned Ford cars were successful, yet out of 16 models sold on Romanian market, Romanians preferred three: coupe de luxe, cabriolet de luxe, and Fordor de luxe⁴⁴. Ads suggested that owning of these categories the automobile was important for working, transportation, but also for leisure.

Among other activities Ford Romania participated were racing and scouts training. Mihai Sontag, Petre Cristea and Alexandru Berlescu - well known race drivers, but also Prince Nicholas were competing with Ford cars. One of the greatest successes was Petre Cristea's victory at the Monte Carlo Race in 1938.

⁴⁴ From the Collections Ford Motor Co. Archives - Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearbon (MI), Acc. 1790, Box 24.

Scouts' training was also important, even Mihai I of Romania participated in the training in 1938.

In August 31, 1939 Romanian government purchased 1,500 ambulances and 400 trucks from Ford Great Britain, 250 trucks Ford Germany, 500 Ford trucks with Marmon Harrington drive (1,600/1,800\$ each) and 1,000 trucks from the United States, and 250 trucks from Ford Romania⁴⁵. Starting in February 1940, Ford-Dagenham delivered assembly kits to Romania for assembling 700 trucks, 4 fuel tanks, 27 ambulances, 90 vehicles for troop's transportation and 50 cars. Ford Motor Company started a new era by supplying the Romanian Army, as they needed a significant number of Ford trucks. Between 1939 and 1942, the Company delivered 2,320 wagon trucks, 200 tanks and 488 tractors to the Army⁴⁶.

The war made the company's activity difficult. Furthermore, as soon as Romania became Germany's ally, all imports from the United States and United Kingdom stopped. Moreover, German branch from Cologne became its supervisor. E. R. Wachner maintained his position as manager. In August 1944, Romanian government classified Ford Motor Company of Romania as equipments and buildings abandoned by the enemy. For a short time, the new manager was a governmental administrator. The plant remained under military control and it repaired military vehicles for the Romanian and Soviet armies⁴⁷.

After the Second World War, United Kingdom branch attempted to resume trade with Ford Motor Company of Romania, but as soon as September 1946 the Romanian branch ended its activity. Ford Motor Company of Romania was not able to liquidate its assets because Romanian authorities forbade the sale of its machine parts and they also fired the entire staff. On November 15, 1947 S.A.R.P.I.A. (Societatea Anonim Română pentru Producția și Importul de Automobile) took control for the next three years. In 1948, the plant was nationalized. The United Kingdom Government sued for damages in the amount of 289,259 pound sterling in the name of Ford Motor Company. In 1964 they received 10,575 pound sterling and until 1966 another installment of 15,863 should have been paid. Ford Motor Company tried to come back in Romania in 1966, through its German subsidiary, but without any success⁴⁸. In 1992, Romcar became Ford Motor Company representative. In 2008, Ford Motor Company came back to Romania, the Romanian government and the company reached an agreement to purchase the Craiova vehicle manufacturing plant⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, 1910-1940*, Reel 27, 871.24/82, August 31, 1939.

⁴⁶ <http://www.retromobil.ro>. During this time, the Army controlled the factory, it was renamed *Atelierele Centrale de Reparații* and its manager was a military officer.

⁴⁷ <http://www.retromobil.ro>.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ http://media.ford.com/newsroom/release_display.cfm?release=24149.

Conclusions

Ford Motor Company represents a compelling example for American consumption in Romania. The Ford Motor Company of Romania was representative for economic relations between Romania and the United States, but also because the role it played within Romania and Eastern Europe. Ford Romania coordinated sales in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Moreover, it redefined industrial labor relations, production techniques, and it offered an alternative model in Romania. The automobile per se and the people associated with it were also crucial in understanding American consumption in Romania. Furthermore, the cars were instruments of distinctions, mainly upper and middle class bought them. In Roland Barthes compelling lines the cars were „the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population, which appropriated them as purely magic objects”⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972, p. 88.

Annex 1

Owners of Ford cars (1911-1912)

1. Iorgu Opran, 1-a	Ploie ti
2. Iorgu Opran, 2 a	Ploie ti
3. Doctor G. Patzeli	Bucure ti
4. Ioan Geblescu	Bucure ti
5. C. Dimitrescu Negrea	Craiova
6. Doctor George Nanu	Bucure ti
7. Friez Wiermescu	Pite ti
8. Alex. Bura Licherdopol	Bucure ti
9. S. Iritz	Craiova
10. Grigore Iunian	Târgu-Jiu
11. C pitan Stavrat	F Iticeni
12. E. A. Pucher & C-ie 1-a	Bucure ti
13. E. A. Pucher & C-ie 2-a	Bucure ti
14. Maior Scarlat Petroianu	Craiova
15. C pitan H. B descu	Târgu-Jiu
16. Dr. M. Trandafirescu	Bucure ti
17. C pitan Spiru Roman	Bucure ti
18. Alexandru Caribol	Târgu-Jiu
19. Grigore Arion	Bucuresti
20. Niculescu & Cotimani	Alexandria
21. Nicolae Constantinescu	Bucure ti
22. Colonel Greceanu, Adj. Regal	Bucure ti
23. General Cr iniceanu	Bucure ti
24. Doctor D. Z. Niculescu	Ploie ti
25 T. M Id rescu	Craiova
26. Isidor Feldstein	Bucure ti
27. Maior Costescu, Adj. Regal	Bucure ti
28. C pitan Kiriak	Piatra-Neam
29. Alex. Miscovitz	Ro iori
30. Christea Capr	Alexandria
31. I. C Iniceanu	Târgu-Jiu
32. tefan S ftoiu, Avocat	Br ila
33. Iorgu Dinulescu	Ploie ti
34. Peicu B dulescu	Giurgiu
35. Pavel Simionov	Bucure ti
36. Locotenet VI descu	Craiova

37. Petrache Nicolau	1-a	Foc ani
38. Petrache Nicolau	2-a	Foc ani
39. C. pitan N. Teodoru		Chitila
40. Profesor D. Avramescu		Târgu-Jiu
41. Doctor George Miron		Bucure ti
42. George Boamb		Bucure ti
43. Dimitrie Boboiceanu		Turnu-Severin
44. George M. celaru		Bucure ti
45. Vasile M. celaru		Bucure ti
46. Doctor R. dulescu		Bucure ti
47. Const. G. Stravolca	1-a	F. urei
48. Const. G. Stravolca	2-a	F. urei
49. Const. Butculescu		Bucure ti
50. Maior Dr. Constantinescu		Bucure ti
51. Const. Georgescu		Bucure ti
52. Calliope Dimescu		Bucure ti
53. T. Ruptureanu		Bucure ti
54. Mitic Dumitrescu		Obedeni
55. Alex. Calangiu		Câmpulung
56. Ni. Calangiu		Câmpulung
57. Elena Nenoveanu		Bucure ti
58. Banca Ro. iori		Ro. iori-de Vede
59. Al. St. nciulescu		Bucure ti
60. Vasile Georgescu		Pantelimon
61. Arthur Steinmetz		Bucure ti
62. Haralamb Stoenescu		Pite ti
63. Ion Letea		Bucure ti
64. D-na Ri. a Tudoran		Bucure ti
65. Jean Ni. ulescu		Turnu-Severin
66. N. G. Udrescu		Ploie ti
67. Maior Scurteanu		Câmpulung
68. Preotul Alex. Popescu		Bujor
69. Josef Wechsler	1-a	Bucure ti
70. Josef Wechsler	2-a	Bucure ti
71. Alex. Nicolan		Ghimpa i
72. Societatea "Asfaltul"		Bucure ti
73. Take D. C. I. ra. u		Bucure ti
74. Principele G. Soutzo	1-a	Bucure ti
75. Principele G. Soutzo	2-a	Bucure ti

76. C linescu & C-ie		T rgovi te
77. N. Chiriac		Bucure ti
78. Gherasim Sutocikn		Bucure ti
79. Florian Pr. Dumitrescu		Bucure ti
80. Mitu Andreescu		Craiova
81. Doctor B rdescu		Bucure ti
82. General Zottu		Bucure ti
83. Brosc rescu, Pref. Poli iei		Craiova
84. Ivanovici		Craiova
85. H. Dimoftie		Bucure ti
86. Turceanu, avocet		Craiova
87. C pitan Michailidi		Bucuresti
88. Clayton & Shuttleworth		Ro iori-de Vede
89. Locotenent Sadoveanu		Târgu-Jiu
90. Colonel Maltopol		C lara i
91. Vasile M celaru		Bucure ti
92. Nicolae Coma		Târgu-Jiu
93. Gh. Lupa cu		Târgu-Ocna
94. Ferdinand Bruner		Ro iori-de Vede
95. P. O. Nedeianu		Craiova
96. Ioan V. Chiurtu		Craiova
97. Fortunescu, deputat		Gala i
98. Du escu		Bucure ti
99. Montesi E.		Azuga
100. Mitu Andreescu	2-a	Craiova
101 Mitu Andreescu	3-a	Craiova
102 Mitu Andreescu	4-a	Craiova
103. Prim ria Craiova	1-a	Craiova
104 Prim ria Craiova	2-a	Craiova
105. Petre Teodorescu		Bucure ti
106. Dimitrie Brudea		Ia i
107. C. Dumitrescu		Bucure ti

Annex 2
Ford Sellers in Romania, 1938

ARAD - I.M.A.S.A., St. Radnei 37-39
BOTO ANI – I. BACAL, St. Na ional 201
BRA OV – J. TEINDEL, St. Regele Carol 53
BUCURE TI – FORD ROMÂN S.A.R., St. Floreasca
BUCURE TI – RAF S.A.R., Bd. Tache Ionescu 4-6
BUCURE TI – DIAF S.A.R., St. Buzdugan 11
CERN U I – AUTOMOTORUL S.C.G.L., Pia a Unirii 3
CHI IN U – BIRNBAUM, St. Gen. Bro teanu 60
CLUJ - AUTOMOBILIA S.A.R., St. tefan cel Mare 3
CONSTAN A – D. ST. DIMITRIU, St. Carol 65
CRAIOVA – SEBAR S.A., St. Cuza-Vod 4
FOC ANI – AUTOGARAJUL PUTNEI, St. Mare 117
GALA I – AUTO-SPORT A. FICHMAN, St. Br ilei 24
IA I – ORECO S.A.R., St. tefan cel Mare 21
ORADEA – ANDRISKA & ROSENBAUM, St. Barbu Delavrancea 5
PITE TI – BANCA DE CREDIT AUTOMOBILIST, St. Domni a B la a 45
PLOIE TI – PRAHOBAR S.A.R., St. Basarab 4
SATU-MARE – MIHAI ZINGER, St. Horia 5
SIBIU – F. ADAMI “SPORT”, St. S rii 33-35
TÂRGOVI TE - MIHAIL A. COSTESCU, St. Stelei 5
TÂRGU-MURE – AGROFERA, St. C l ra ilor 7
TIMI OARA – BANAT MOTOR, St. Duca 8





Fig. 1 Argus, 7 March 1912, 2.



Fig. 2 Ford Motor Company Caravan, Courtesy B.A.R., Prints and Drawings Collections



Fig. 4 Ford Motor Company of Romania building as sketched by the architect P. Em. Miclescu



Fig. 3 Ford Assembly Plant



Fig. 5 Floreasca Assembly Plant – interior



Fig. 6. Mihai I of Romania, Courtesy B.A.R., Prints and Drawings Collections